



# **5TH WAFFEN SS PANZER "DIVISION WIKING" 1940- 1945 ILLUSTRATED**

GERMAN ARMY CENTER MILITARY HISTORY

# **5th SS Panzer Division "Wiking"**



**Publisher's note**

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# German Army Center Military History

**I swear to you, Adolf Hitler, as leader and Chancellor of the German nation, loyalty and courage. I vow to you and to the superiors appointed to you, obedience unto death, so help me God.**

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# **5th SS Panzer Division "Wiking"**



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## **—Preface**

**15th April 1945**

The Leader's Order.

Order Of The Day. 15th April, 1945.

Last Proclamation: Soldiers Of The German Eastern Front!

For the last time our deadly enemies the Jewish Bolsheviks have launched their massive forces to the attack. Their aim is to reduce Germany to ruins and to exterminate our Folk. Many of you soldiers in the east already know the fate which threatens, above all, German women, girls, and children. While the old men and children will be murdered, the women and girls will be reduced to barrackroom whores. The remainder will be marched off to Siberia.

We have foreseen this thrust, and since last January have done everything possible to construct a strong Front. The enemy will be greeted by massive artillery fire. Gaps in our infantry have been made good by countless new units. Our Front is being strengthened by emergency units, newly raised units, and by the Germanic Folk Militia. This time the Bolshevik will meet the ancient fate of Asia — he must and shall bleed to death before the capital of the German Reich. Whoever fails in his duty at this moment behaves as a traitor to our Folk. The Regiment or Division which abandons its position acts so disgracefully that it must be ashamed before the women and children who are withstanding the terror of bombing in our cities. Above all, be on your guard against the few treacherous Officers and soldiers who, in order to preserve their pitiful lives, fight against us in Russian pay, perhaps even wearing German uniform. Anyone ordering you to retreat will, unless you know him well personally, be immediately arrested and, if necessary, killed on the spot, no matter what rank he may hold. If every soldier on the Eastern Front does his duty in the days and weeks which lie ahead, the last assault of Asia will crumble, just as the invasion by our enemies in the west will finally fail, in spite of everything.

Berlin remains German, Vienna will be German again, and Europe will never be Russian. Form yourselves into a sworn brotherhood, to defend, not the empty conception of a Fatherland, but your homes, your wives, your children, and, with them, our future. In these hours, the whole German Folk looks to you, my fighters in the east, and only hopes that, thanks to your resolution and fanaticism, thanks to your weapons, and under your leadership, the Bolshevik assault will be choked in a bath of blood. At this moment, when Fate has removed from the Earth the greatest war criminal of all time, the turning point of this war will be decided.

signed: Adolf Hitler.

## **German Army**

The German army had a number of special forces, most of which are best

described by the French term *hors de ligne*, that is “outside of the regular army.” Foreign troops have always fallen into this category in every army and the Germans certainly ended up with a tremendous force of foreign soldiers fighting in their uniforms. However, the Germans had three other non-traditional forces in their army.

The first, the Waffen SS, sprang from Hitler's personal bodyguard and much like many other Guard forces in the world's long military history, developed into a completely independent army all unto itself. Though not intentionally, it most assuredly falls into a



category quite similar to that held by Napoleon's Imperial Guard, whose roots also are found in a dictator's personal bodyguard. Unlike the Imperial Guard, which was Napoleon's favored children, the SS belonged not to Adolf Hitler, but to Heinrich Himmler, Reichs-fuhrer der SS. It was not only a field force, but a tool in the internal political struggle between Hitler's cronies.

The SS also, like Napoleon's Imperial Guard, contained large numbers of foreign troops. In contrast to Napoleon's Imperial Guard, however, the SS went on a massive recruiting effort among foreign nationals in an effort to make it as large as possible. And, also unlike Napoleon's Imperial Guard, the German portions of the SS were subjected to an ideological mania for racial purity that was frequently swept aside when it was convenient. Large portions of the SS contained non-Germanic troops. Much of the SS fought with a steadfastness that was found in Napoleon's Old Guard, while some parts formed with foreign nationals had very poor reputations that included mass desertions, mutiny, and atrocity.

The second portion of forces *hors de ligne* in the German army was the Luftwaffe ground troops. The German division of operations between the army, navy, and air force was contorted by personalities and the political power base on which the Reich was formed. Hermann Goring claimed and was given anything that had any involvement with flying. As a result, the German paratroopers or *fallschirmjagers*, were part of the Luftwaffe. Operationally they were handled by the Army, but they were Goring's toys to play with as he wished. Like the SS, however, they also developed a ferocious reputation as fanatical fighters and were greatly feared and respected by their enemies.

Unlike the *fallschirmjagers*, the Luftwaffe also produced a number of Luftwaffe Field Divisions. These units were a second line formation at best, though they frequently ended up in the front lines and invariably took a terrible pounding for their troubles. They were underequipped and undertrained for frontline duties, though eventually they developed reasonable combat skills. They were produced as Hermann Goring attempted to garner favor from Hitler by producing a series of divisions to block the advance of the Russian armies in the winter of 1941/2.

The third force *hors de ligne* was a small number of naval divisions that were raised very late in the war. The surface navy had been so torn up by the Allies that it had very little use. Those ships that were operational continued to retain full use of their crews, but those crews whose ships were gone, those support people who were suddenly without function, found themselves swept up and rifles shoved in their hands in an effort to stem the flow of the Russian hordes westward into the Fatherland. The last force is the traditional forces *hors de ligne* and those are the multitude of completely foreign 'forces that fought alongside the Germans. The largest single group of foreigners in the German army were former citizens of the Soviet Union. They started out as small numbers of volunteers that simply joined up with the Wehrmacht as it pushed through Russia. They were deserters from the Soviet army and they were enthusiastic citizens who came forward and wanted to fight against their communist oppressors. It is believed that fully 25 percent of the German army at the end of the war were former citizens of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>



Germany also obtained a large number of foreign troops from the various puppet states that it established. The largest force was probably the Italians. After the Allies invaded, Italian society tore itself in half. The diehard fascists remained true to Mussolini and the Germans, forming a number of divisions and a large number of support units that fought until the end of the war.

Germany also established a puppet state in Slovakia, which provided three infantry divisions, a mechanized division, and a security division, all of which fought on the Russian front. Then there is the puppet state of Croatia, which was as much an endlessly bleeding ulcer to the Nazis as was Spain to Napoleon. In order to deal with this, and perhaps following Frederick the Great's opinion that the entire Balkans was "not worth the bones of one Pomeranian grenadier," Hitler encouraged Croatia to form an army that would be entirely committed to fighting the Serbian and communist partisans in Yugoslavia.

There is an amazing spectrum of performance and quality to be seen as one examines the combat record of these forces. Most of the SS and *Fallschirmjagers* were surely the most aggressive and hardest fighting units in the German army. The SS was frequently used as the fire brigade rushing from one emergency to another, plugging the line and beating back Russian, American or British breakthroughs. The *fallschirmjagers* more often found themselves put into the critical positions in the line and simply refused to be pushed out of them. The Luftwaffe Field and Naval Divisions were stopgap measures of varying military prowess that were never used to lead any assault. The foreign troops, like the SS, ran the spectrum of quality from extremely good to most often of modest value. They are also one of the most interesting and saddest portions of the history of World War II. They were

frequently motivated by nationalism and the desire to liberate themselves from one oppressor, only to find themselves oppressed by yet another.

## Origins

The origins of the SS lie right back at the genesis of the Nazi movement in Germany in 1923. These were turbulent times, and few then would have been willing to bet on the outcome of the struggle for domination of Germany between the Nazis and the Communists. The two sides often battled violently in the streets, and injuries and deaths were far from uncommon. It was clear that some form of bodyguard element was required to protect those who spoke at Nazi outdoor meetings. The SA Stormtroopers, the *Sturmabteilung*, or “Brownshirts”, were little more than an unruly rabble, most of them unemployed :hugs with no real loyalty to Hitler, but useful for meeting the opposing Communists head on in countless violent street fights while, in the main, being by no means trustworthy or disciplined enough to :: rovide reliable bodyguards for the Party leadership. Hitler, however, had been impressed by the performance of at least some of his ‘minders’, and in March 1923 he decided to form an elite, dedicated bodyguard unit from a number of such dependable comrades. The task of forming this trusted band was delegated to his faithful chauffeur, Julius Schreck, and another trusted follower, Josef Berchtold. To begin with, this group was simply a small detachment within the SA, and was known as the *Stabswache*, or Headquarter Guard. Within a few weeks it had been expanded and took on the name *Stosstrupp Adolf Hitler*. This so-called ‘Shock Troop’ took part in the abortive Munich Putsch of 9 November 1923, providing personal protection for Hitler. On Hitler’s release from Landsberg Prison following the abortive Putsch, he decided to reform his bodyguard, and once again turned to Julius Schreck to create this new unit. Initially, it consisted of just eight chosen men, and thanks to Hermann Goring was given the title of *Schutz Staffel*, or ‘Protection Squad’. This was a reference to Goring’s highly successful career as a fighter pilot during the First World War, when this title was used for aircraft allocated to flying escort duties.

It was intended that the *Schutz Staffel*, which rapidly became known by its abbreviated form ‘SS’, would not exceed ten men plus one officer in each district, the exception to this being the Reich’s capital city, Berlin, where the SS detachment was to be double the normal size.

The elite status of the SS was enhanced by the extremely high standards of physical fitness and general appearance of those recruited to its ranks, but most importantly, by the fact that its owed its allegiance, not to the Party, but to the person of Adolf Hitler himself.



7.5cm Panzerjäger Marder II (SdKfz 131) ss  
PanzerjägerAbteilung Wiking/Panzerjäger  
Kompanie



In April 1926, Schreck relinquished command of the SS to another of Hitler's most loyal followers, Josef Berchtold, who had by this time recovered from wounds he had received marching by Hitler's side during the Munich Putsch. The general ranks of the brownshirt army, the SA, were highly suspicious and resentful of this new elite unit which appeared in their midst, the SS still at this time being subordinate to the SA. This resentment grew when Hitler entrusted the care of the so-called '*Blutfahne*', a Nazi flag splattered with the blood of those marchers killed or wounded during the Putsch, and which had, to the Nazis, acquired the status almost of a holy relic, to the SS. The SA had previously cared for the *Blutfahne*. The situation was far from ideal, with the SA's resentment matched by the SS's rancour by reason of its subordination to the SA. SS units in any area were eventually restricted to a maximum of 10.per cent of the size of the SA contingent, and this only when the SA unit to which it was subordinated actually reached its full, allocated strength. The SA therefore found it easy to manipulate the size of SS units over which it had control, many SA units also taking great delight in allocating the most menial task to their SS contingents.



Resentful of the restrictions placed on the development of the SS, Berchtold resigned, command passing to his deputy, Erhardt Heiden. Heiden, unfortunately, had no more success than Berchtold in circumventing the spiteful machinations of the SA, and he too lasted for only a short time as commander of the SS before he resigned. The SA no doubt took great pleasure in this, and anticipated just as easily manipulating his successor. In this they were to be greatly mistaken. Heiden's successor was another veteran of the Munich Putsch, one Heinrich Himmler. Though his appearance was far from impressive, with his pince-nez spectacles and rather weedy turnout, Himmler was a superb organiser and was fired with enthusiasm for, and dedication to, the success of the SS. In 1928 he was appointed *Reichsführer-SS*.<sup>2</sup>

By 1929 Himmler had persuaded Hitler to approve a recruitment plan for the SS, and within a year it had grown in strength to around one thousand men, although still subordinated to the SA. In 1931 there occurred an incident which was to greatly enhance the status of the SS in the eyes of Hitler. The Berlin SA had been growing resentful of what it saw as Hitler's favouritism towards the Bavarian SA, based in Munich, which was of course the 'spiritual home' of Nazism. On 1 April, the SS in Berlin alerted Hitler to the fact that the SA leader, *Oberführer* Walther Stennes, had revolted and occupied the premises of the Nazi newspaper *Der Angriff*, published by the *Gauleiter* of Berlin, Josef Goebbels, and had evicted the Nazi propaganda chief. In the event, however, the revolt quickly fizzled out through lack of support, and the rebel SA members were quickly purged. Hitler was greatly appreciative that the SS had remained loyal during this

potentially dangerous episode and publicly congratulated them. Himmler's reward was to be appointed as Head of Party Security. From this position of power, Himmler set about expanding his nascent SS empire, so that by the end of 1932 it had grown in strength to some 50,000 men.

By this time, life in Germany had deteriorated into a situation of near total anarchy, with armed Nazis and Communists battling in the streets. Hitler's promises of full employment and a return of law and order swung the votes in the 1933 elections in his favour, and on 30 January *Reichspräsident* von Hindenburg appointed Hitler to the office of Chancellor. Within a month, the Reichstag building was gutted in an arson attack, for which the Communists were "lamed, and Hitler lost no time in issuing a proclamation granting police powers to the SA and the SS. This resulted in over 15,000 SS men being sworn in as police 'auxiliaries', and the round-up of political opponents began.

The original SS was required to provide security for the Party hierarchy in general, but at this point Hitler decided to form a special armed bodyguard unit from within the ranks of the SS whose purpose would be to provide him personally with a protective escort. The task of raising this 'elite within an elite' was given to one of his most trusted friends, the Bavarian *SSGruppenführer*, Josef 'Sepp' Dietrich. Dietrich, a decorated combat veteran of the First World War, set to work immediately, and by March 1933 had established a guard unit of some 120 hand-picked men which was to become known as the *SS-Stabswache Berlin*. In late April, this guard unit moved into the old Officer Cadet Institute at Berlin-Lichterfelde. Within just two months it was undergoing expansion, and the enlarged unit was renamed as the *SS-Sonderkommando Zossen*.

A further special guard element known as *SS-Sonderkommando Jüterbog* was formed in May, interestingly, with a number of attached Army officers to assist with training, and in September both were brought together to form the *Adolf Hitler Standarte*, each member of the unit being issued with a cuffband bearing Hitler's name. From July to October of 1933, these elite SS guards provided security at Hitler's retreat at the Obersalzberg, near Berchtesgaden in Bavaria.

On 9 November 1933, on the tenth anniversary of the Munich Putsch, this regiment took a personal oath of fealty to Adolf Hitler and had its name amended to *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, once again emphasising its unique elite status. (The *Leib-Hussaren*, *Leib-Standarte*, of Imperial Germany were the direct equivalent of the 'Life Guards' in other nations such as Great Britain, traditionally entrusted with the safety of the monarch or head of State.)

The wording of the oath was as follows:

*I swear to you, Adolf Hitler, as leader and Chancellor of the German nation, loyalty and courage. I vow to you and to the superiors appointed to you, obedience unto death, so help me God.*

The similarities between the Praetorian Guard of Roman times and Hitler's new SS Elite Guard are too obvious to be coincidental.

The recruitment criteria for this unit were extremely selective. Applicants had to be between seventeen and twenty-two years of age, a minimum of 5 ft 11 in tall, later raised to 6 ft Min, and in perfect physical health. <sup>3</sup>





Shortly thereafter, the unit terminology of the *Allgemeine-SS*, the *Schar*, *Sturm* and *Sturmabteilung*, began to be replaced by the equivalent military terms, such as *Zug* (Platoon), *Kompanie* (Company) and *Bataillon* (Battalion) as used in the *Wehrmacht*, further enhancing the military status of the armed SS.

Around this time, a number of other small, armed detachments were being created at *SS-Abschnitt* level throughout Germany. Limited to a size of 100 men (the police also raised several such quasi-military units, known as '*Hundertschaften*') and in critical areas, these units were brought together to form the so-called *Politische Bereitschaften*. On 24 September 1934, Hitler decreed that the *Politische Bereitschaften* be brought together to form a new armed SS force to be known as the *SS-Verfügungstruppe*. In March 1933, Himmler had been appointed Police President of Munich and founded the first concentration camp at Dachau. This was rapidly joined by others at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. These though thoroughly unpleasant places, were worlds apart from the death camp established later during the Holocaust. It was intended that potential enemies of the State who were considered dangerous but who had not been found guilty in court of any specific crime would be detained in these camps for 're-education'. Indeed though treatment was often brutal, many were subsequently released when no longer considered a threat, a luxury of course not available to later inmates. It was around this time that the first of the *Wachverbände*, 01 Guard Units, were formed to staff these camps under the command of *SS-Oberführer* Theodor Eicke. By 1935, five full battalions, or *Wachsturmbanne*, of these troops had been formed: *Oberbayern* (at Dachau), *Elbe* (at Lichtenburg), *Sachsen* (at Sachsenburg), *Ostfriesland* (at Esterwegen) and *Brandenburg* (at Oranienburg). In 1937, further reorganisation saw these battalions formed into three full deathhead regiments: *SS-Totenkopfstandarten Oberbayern* (at Dachau), *Brandenburg* (at Sachsenhausen) and *Thuringen* (at Buchenwald). These units would become officially

designated as the *SS-Totenkopfverbände* in 1936. *Post-Anschluss*, a fourth regiment, *SS-Totenkopfstandarte Ostmark*, was established at the concentration camp at Mauthausen in Austria, and in 1939, a fifth, *SS-Totenkopfstandarte Dietrich Eckardt*, was also formed. From a beginning as little more than brutal thugs guarding hapless concentration camp inmates, the *SS-Totenkopfverbände* (SS-TV) would become a well-trained military force, though no less brutal in its methods, which would in turn provide the *Waffen-SS* with the unit that would become the formidable *3 SS-Panzer Division Totenkopf*.

Meanwhile the SA continued its expansion, and the Army grew ever more concerned at rumours that the brownshirts considered themselves as a revolutionary force which would replace the regular Army. Hitler too was becoming concerned that the SA was slipping beyond his control, seeing its allegiance being owed to its own commander-in-chief, *SA-Stabschef* Ernst Rohm, and Rohm's enemies lost no time in feeding Hitler's mistrust of his once-valued comrade. Eventually, Rohm demanded the formation of a people's army to replace the regular Army, which he would personally command. This was the final straw for both Hitler and the generals of the regular Army. There was now a real danger of civil war, and Hitler was determined to eliminate this threat from within his own movement. . To execute his plan, Hitler called up his most trusted men, the SS. He called a meeting of SA leaders for 30 June 1934, at which the unsuspecting SA leaders were quickly arrested by SS troops and those determined as the ringleaders executed. The SS of course also took the opportunity of settling some of its own old scores, and eventually over 300 were executed in what was to become known as the 'Night of the Long Knives'. A new 'puppet' leader, Viktor Lütze, was appointed to command the SA, with Hitler confident that this weak and colourless individual would prove no threat. He was correct. The SA was reduced to a mere quarter of its former size and at the same time was disarmed. It would no longer pose a threat to Hitler or be a serious obstacle to the development of the SS. Once again, the SS had proved itself loyal, prepared to act outside the law, and even commit murder when its *Führer* so wished. In reward, Hitler declared the SS to now be a fully independent branch of the Party, no longer subordinate to the disgraced and humiliated SA.

During this period of struggle, the SS had mushroomed to some 200,000 strong. Recruitment criteria had been relaxed due to the need for rapid expansion to allow the SS to better withstand the pressure placed upon it by the resentful brownshirts. With the threat of the SA removed, however, Himmler immediately set about restoring its elite status. Many members were no longer considered appropriate for the new, reborn, elite SS. and over 60.000 men were dropped from its ranks.

In October 1934. an SS officer cadet training school (*SS-Junkerschule*) was opened at Bad Tolz in Bavaria, and was joined in 1935 by a further establishment in Brunswick (*SS-Junkerschule Braunschweig*). Several highly experienced former Army officers were recruited to provide the SS trainees with high-quality military training.

The first full regiment of *SS-Verfügungstruppe* was created around a core of former members of the *Politische Bereitschaften* when three *Sturmbanne* were amalgamated under the title *SS-Standarte I Deutschland* Munich.

A further regiment, *SS-Standarte 2 Germania*, was formed in Hamburg, and following the 1938 *Anschluss* with Austria, a third regiment was formed in Vienna under the title *SS-Standarte 3 Der Führer*. With the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, the *SS-Verfügungstruppe* and the *SS-Totenkopfverbände* at his disposal, Himmler now had the requisite raw material

to provide the nucleus for the creation of his own SS army.

### 5th S.S Panzer Division Wiking

Nordische Division(Nr 5) 1940

SS Division Germania (mot)

SS Division Wiking 1941

SS Panzeregrenadier Division Wiking 1942

5. SS Panzer Division Wiking 1943

After the May 1940 *Sieg im Westen*, or Victory in the West, the SS began an active programme to recruit suitably 'Nordic' or 'Germanic' volunteers from northern and western Europe to join a number of *Waffen-SS Freiwilligen* (volunteer) legions. This effort intensified after June 1941, as the SS exhorted volunteers to join the campaign in the Soviet Union. However, all this was still in the future and standards were still high in September 1940, when Hitler consented to the raising of a new *Waffen-SS* division. Originally to be named *SS-Division Germania*, the backbone of the unit was to be provided by the experienced and combat-tested *Germania* Regiment of the SS-VT Division.



Panzerkampfwagen III Ausf N (SdKfz 141/2) 5. SS Panzer Regiment Wiking

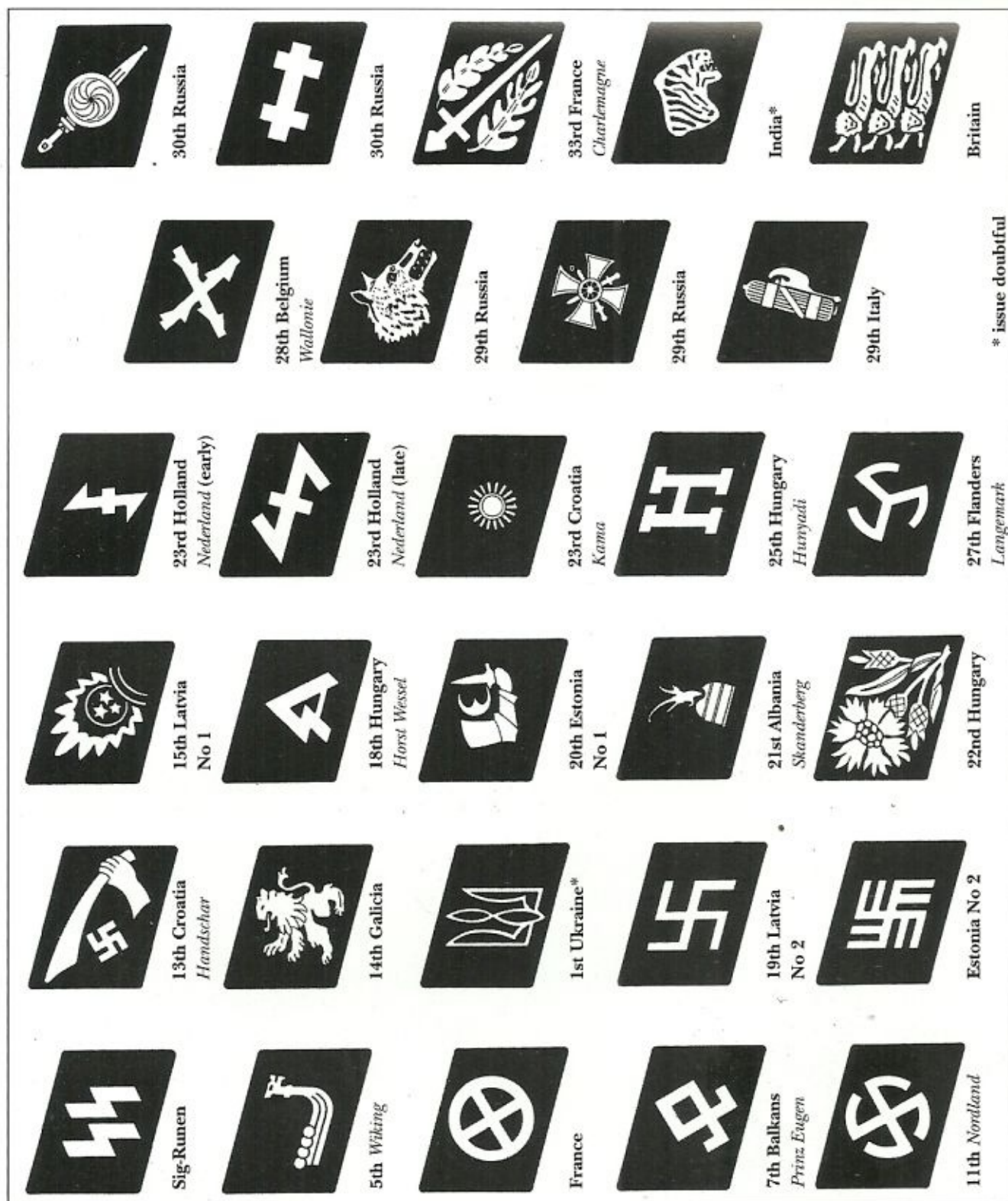
It was hoped that the bulk of its strength would be provided by Dutch, Flemish, Danish and Norwegian volunteers serving in the volunteer *SS Regiment Westland*. This was a sop to the Army, which had been complaining about the SS poaching the best German recruits. *SS-Infanterie Regiment 11*, one of the *SS Totenkopfstandarten*, replaced *Germania* in the SS-VT. Further strength was supplied by the transfer of the *SS-Standarte Nordland*. Early 1941 saw the addition of a volunteer unit of Finns, the *Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS Nordost*, which had been raised, in February 1941.

On 20 December, Hitler ordered that the division should be known as the *SS-Division Wiking*. Commanded by Felix Steiner, one of the most influential officers in the *Waffen-SS*, *Wiking* was the first 'international' *Waffen-SS* division. It proved to be an excellent fighting unit, and as the *5.SS-Panzer-Division Wiking* it gained a combat reputation second to none. However, in spite of the hopes of the SS to make it a Germanic volunteer formation, Germans always outnumbered Nordic volunteers in its ranks.

**1941**



The division first saw action on 29 June 1941. Assigned to Army Group South, it took part in the fighting for Tarnopol in Galicia. Opposition from isolated pockets of resistance and guerrilla groups aside, the progress of the division's tanks over the roads of the Ukraine from Dubno to the outskirts of Zhitomir was relatively free of problems, as seemingly endless lines of Soviet prisoners captured in the pocket of Lvov were marching towards the rear. Abandoned tanks and guns cluttered the roads. <sup>4</sup>



## Across the Dnieper

In August, 1941, the division was at the head of the army group as it fought to establish a bridgehead across the Dnieper River. Continuing the drive, *Wiking* fought its way through



Dnepropetrovsk and on to Rostov. According to one SS man, the fall of Rostov was greeted by its inhabitants with 'tremendous enthusiasm'. As far as the Red Army was concerned, the truth was otherwise. First, the Germans had been slowed by anti-tank obstacles, ditches and minefields. *Wiking* troops faced not Red Army soldiers but fanatical NKVD men, the shock troops of the Communist state. These men fought hand-to-hand in the streets, where they ripped up paving blocks to serve as thick barricades.

Almost every door concealed booby traps and tripwires. Pillboxes spat fire amid flamethrowers, grenades, machine guns, rifles and bayonets. The *Wiking* wounded, were either bayoneted as they lay in the street or were dragged from troop-carriers serving as makeshift ambulances. Within days, the Soviets had driven the Germans out of the town and they fell back to defensive positions across the Mius, leaving behind piles of dead.

Against furious onslaughts, the *Leibstandarte*

and the *Wiking* Division held on, but their men knew that the position was hopeless. When the Germans were pushed out of Rostov by the first truly successful Red Army counterattack, *Wiking* moved back to the line of the Mius River, where the division spent the winter months.

WHEN THE GERMANS LAUNCHED THEIR MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN THE SUMMER OF 1942, *WIKING* WAS AGAIN ONE OF THE SPEARHEAD DIVISIONS. ITS MAKE-UP HAD CHANGED, HOWEVER, AS INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS OF THE *WIKING* DIVISION WERE ADDED AND REMOVED MANY TIMES IN ITS EXISTANCE. AS A REPLACEMENT FOR THE DISBANDED FINNISH BATTALION OF THE *NORDLAND* REGIMENT, THE *ESTONIAN NARWA* REGIMENT WAS TRANSFERRED TO *WIKING*. THE *NORDLAND* REGIMENT ITSELF WAS DETACHED TO HELP ESTABLISH A NEW *WAFFEN-SS* DIVISION, THE *NORDLAND* DIVISION.

Army Group South, renamed Army Group B, was to advance into the bend of the Don River then on to the Volga at Stalingrad. The other claw in a gigantic pincer movement would be a new formation. Army Group A, comprising First Panzer Army, Seventeenth Army and Third Romanian Army, would link up with Army Group B somewhere on the steppe west of the Volga, hopefully trapping another vast haul of Soviet prisoners. Army Group A would then lunge south and east to overrun the Soviet oilfields. Six months after they had endured winter temperatures of -30°C (-22°F), *Wiking* found themselves leading the First Panzer Army on the Kuban steppe, where the thermometer topped 40°C (104°F) in the shade. Inside the tanks and fighting vehicles, the heat was simply unbearable. The terrain slowed up fighting troops as well as supplies. Roads were rivers of dust, and the rivers were wide, with unpredictable currents.

Nevertheless, the SS *Wiking* Division forced the River Kuban in the face of intense Soviet resistance early in August. On 9 August, *Panzerarmee* took Pyatigorsk at the bottom of the first foothills of the Caucasus, and patrols were sent out towards Astrakhan.

However, this was as far as it went. The *Wiking* Division had fought its way into and through the Caucasus. It would remain in the area until von Kluge's army group was forced to pull back after the fall of Stalingrad early in 1943.

By this time, it had been converted from a motorized infantry division into a Panzergrenadier, or armoured infantry, division.

## **Divisional History**

The 5th SS Panzer Division "Wiking" emerged on October 22, 1943, from the renaming of the 5th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Wiking".. At this time, the division had a HKL

based on the Dnieper between Kanev and Cherkassy. On 13 November 1943, the Red Army to establish a bridgehead across the Dnieper in Cherkassy. In the ensuing heavy fighting, she managed a month later to conquer Cherkassy. Subsequently, the positions of the 5th SS Panzer Division ran from south Kanev along the Dnieper Cherkasy direction and then in a south-westerly direction Smela. To December 31, 1943 announced the Division a strength of 14,647 men. Once it was the Red Army succeeded on 28 January 1944 the XI. and the XXXXII. Army Corps between Zvenigorodka - Kanev - include Cherkassy, built the Division on with their rear blocking lines in the southwestern part of the boiler. In the wake of the German Entsatzversuches on February 9, 1944 received the SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment 9 "Germania" command to move into the space Shanderovka to here the relief column of III. Take Panzer Corps. Because of Russian resistance but failed the German relief attempt. From 16 February 1944, the trapped German forces then broke out into the west, with the 5th SS Panzer Division "Wiking" fought split into several combat groups.



Only about 4,000 men reached the German lines without heavy weapons and equipment. These residues were at RISino, about 25 west of Zvenigorodka, assembled and then moved on 25 February 1944 to freshen up in the area east of Lublin. On the 16th of March, the Division came to Kovel, where the refresh should be performed. Until the division of the city, however, was able to achieve this had already been included by the Red Army. The Division of rumbling gathered in the room Maciejów with other German troops to the relief of Kovel. Here also met with the newly established in France III./SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment 9 "Germania" and the II. / SS-Panzer-Regiment 5 a with the division.

On 29 March 1944, the German relief attempt began. Only parts of the II. / SS-Panzer-Regiment 5 could fight its way through by Kovel, but the containment could not be

definitively broken. After feeding the 4th and 5th Panzer Division, the 5th SS Panzer Division "Wiking" came from the April 4, 1944 again to advance to Kovel. In heavy fighting succeeded the German units, liberate Kovel. Subsequent to these struggles, the division was transferred to the SS training area "Heide camp" to finally perform the aborted refresh can. By 30 July 1944, the division was reinforced again on a strength of 17,348 men. In mid-July 1944, over the rest of the division and she was transferred to the room Bialowieza, about 65 km south-east Bialystok. On 19 July 1944, the division then moved in Kamieniec Litewski, about 38 km northeast of Brest, along the river Lesna a beachhead against the fast approaching Russian troops. However, the Division was unable to stabilize the gaping front of Army Group Centre only temporarily. It was entrained in the retreat of the army group and retire behind the bow. In late July 1944, they moved into positions in Stanislawow with front to the south and west. On August 3, 1944, the Division attacked westwards to the front gap to the XXXIX. Close Panzer Corps. After this task could be successfully met, the new HKL was the division of Stanislawow about 10 kilometers to the west.

On the night of 12 August 1944, the Division then went on to a position about 20 km further north back. On 14 August 1944 Russian forces in the interface between the 3rd SS Panzer Division and the 5th SS Panzer Division could break and could not be thrown out of the HKL also. On August 18, 1944, the Battle of Warsaw began. By 24 August, the strength of the Division had dropped to 10,335 men. Until the 6th of September, the division had to withdraw across the Narew. They moved into a new HVAC between Serock to south of Nieporent. In order to strengthen the division here quickly, she was a battalion Ukrainians and 1,000 infantry man not supplied trained Air Force soldiers. On 2 October 1944, the Division had a strength of about 10,000 men. On October 10, 1944, the Red Army entered again on the offensive. Up to October 28, 1944 there was severe attacks and burglaries in the German HKL. In lossy fighting a context of HKL could be protected even if the division it had to go back 12 km far. On 16 November, the Ukrainian III./SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment 10 to the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (Galician no. 1) is returned. As a substitute, the newly formed battalions of the I. SS Panzer Grenadier regiments 23 "Norge" and 24 "Danmark" and other Air Force members of the Division were supplied. The Division end of December 1944 was then withdrawn from the front and moved to Hungary. Before Tata, the division is presented then to attack Budapest ready, which began on January 1st, 1945. First, Tata could be conquered, on January 3, Torjan. The intake of Bicske on 5 January 1945 but failed. Then the German advance was stopped.

On 10 January 1945, the German attack was resumed after regrouping. As the division had already approached fought on about 17 km to Budapest, the German offensive of Hitler was stopped. Then moved the division in the space Csajág Lake Balaton. From here, it should again take part in the re-relief attempt of Budapest on January 18, 1945. After heavy fighting the Sárvíz channel could be exceeded on 19 January 1945 by Kalóz. It was then turns to the north and Sárosd be conquered. On 23 January 1945 the Danube was finally achieved in Adony. Finally, the river Vali was reached where the thrust of the Division remained are final. The period beginning on January 29, 1945 Russian counteroffensive has already led to sharp slumps on the following day in the German HKL. Then began on February 1, 1945, the discontinuation of the division on the line Gárdony - Szolgaeghyáza. On February 4th/5th, 1945, the Division advanced on the basis

of continuous Russian pressure in the “Margaret” position in advance of Stuhlweißenburg a. By the previous battles, the division was so far gone that she was only called battle group.

On February 22, 1945, the Division was moved into the space around Székesfehérvár. Again, the division was made up by members of the Navy and the Air Force, so that it was called from February 27, 1945 as a division. On March 16, 1945, the Red Army began their next offensive. By 10 March, the division lost again most of their heavy weapons. When it became clear that the containment of the city on 21 March, Oberführer Ullrich decided, also abandon the city against Hitler’s command and led the division to the northwest at Lake Balaton over. On March 24, a drip line to Veszprém was briefly once formed where the Division for the last time received compensation from home. This was to Flakhelfer, members of the Safety and Relief Service and to soldiers who were over 50 years old. This was followed by the command, refer to the realm protective position in space southeast of Furstenfeld. On 7 May 1945 the units of the Division left then their positions to make their way to the West. The bulk of the division came at the surrender at Radstadt in Bavaria in American captivity.

## Battles

### Battles for Kharkov *Panzergranadier Division*

In late-November 1942 the division was redesignated the **5th SS Panzergranadier Division Wiking**. By now the division had gained a reputation as an elite formation. In early 1943, it was ordered to fall back to the Ukraine south of Kharkov, recently abandoned by *Obergruppenführer* Paul Hausser’s II SS Panzer Corps, and now the scene of fierce fighting for its recapture.<sup>5</sup>



Erich von Manstein, the new commander of Army Group South, threw 5 SS “Wiking” and the 11th Panzer-Division into action against the Soviet Mobile Group Popov, which was threatening to break through to the vital rail line. 5 SS “Wiking” had great difficulty dealing with the armour-heavy Soviet formation. The Panzergranadier regiments of 5 SS “Wiking” were exhausted and understrength from the fighting in the Caucasus; in addition, the Panzer Battalion lacked sufficient armour to counter the Soviet force. Despite this, the division held off the Soviet assault, protecting the vital rail line and helping bring about the destruction of Mobile Group “Popov”. After the recapture of Kharkov, 5 SS “Wiking” was pulled out of combat to be refitted as a *Panzergranadier division*. Thanks to *Reichführer*-SS Heinrich Himmler’s and Paul Hausser’s efforts, it had been



decided that all *Waffen SS Panzergrenadier* divisions were to have a regiment of Panzers, rather than only a battalion. This meant that the *SS Panzergrenadier* formations were full sized Panzer divisions in all but name. With the upgrade came SdKfz 251 halftracks for one battalion of infantry and an additional panzer Battalion began forming on 28 February 1943. It would be over a year before the new battalion would receive its baptism of fire at Kovel.

During mid-1943, 5 SS “*Wiking*” underwent a major transformation. Steiner, now a *Gruppenführer*, was transferred to command the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps, currently forming in Croatia. His replacement was Herbert Otto Gille, who was to prove himself Steiner’s equal. The remnants of the veteran *SS Regiment “Nordland”*, along with its commander Fritz von Scholz, were removed from the division and used as the nucleus of the new 11th SS Volunteer *Panzergrenadier Division “Nordland”*. Also, the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the *Waffen-SS* was disbanded, as the agreed two years’ service of the Finnish volunteers had ended. In an attempt to offset the loss of the Finns and the *Nordland* regiment, the newly formed Estonian volunteer unit Estonian Volunteer *Panzergrenadier Bataillon “Narwa”* was attached to the division.

### **March-December 1943**

In October 1943, the division was again upgraded, being converted from a

*Panzergrenadier* division to a fully armoured Panzer division. In the summer and autumn of 1943, the division fought in defensive operations in the area of Kharkov and the Dnieper River. By the end of 1943, *Wiking* was one of six divisions occupying a 96km (60-mile) salient at Korsun, on the east of the Dnieper.

Hitler had the unrealistic belief that the 56,000 men in the salient could thrust in an offensive towards Kiev. He had not reckoned on the Soviets. General Konev’s 2nd Ukrainian Front punched through the bridgehead lying between Kremenchug, which lay far to the southwest of Kharkov, and Dnepropetrovsk to the east of Kremenchug. Konev’s objective was to form a wedge between First Panzer Army and Eighth Army. The latter was no match for the strong Soviet muscle and was forced to pull back in the face of the steady advance of the 2nd Ukrainian Front.

### **Kiev**

In the north, things were no better, with ever more powerful Soviet forces throwing the Germans out of Kiev on 6 November after they had established a bridgehead there. Soviet pride was further restored with the recapture, after a temporary loss, of the town (il Zhitomir on 20 November. Buildings there were reduced to rubble and the streets were littered with the burnt-out hulks of vehicles. Of considerable compensation were the large supply dumps and foodstuff depots of Fourth Panzer Army, which the Germans had established in the high summer of triumph two years before.

### **Encirclement**

The men of *Wiking* were assigned to territory where the prospects were bleak for the Germans. Four divisions were encircled in this flat countryside under snow with the temperature in Kirovograd itself at -20°C (-4°F). On 5 January, Konev’s 2nd Ukrainian Front launched its attack and took the city. A breakout was eventually achieved by 3rd Panzer Division with fire cover from the artillery; engineers and *Panzergrenadiers* followed, while the Soviets were pinned down in local fighting.

For all the efforts of the Panzer units and the SS, the truth was that the Soviet advance had

become a flood with the great winter offensive dealing the decisive blow.

### **The Cherkassy Pocket**

The conquest of Kirovograd still left position that Hitler was determined to hold and unfinished business for the Soviets. To the north which was defended by six-and-a-half divisions with lay the salient around Korsun and Cherkassy, a around 56,000 men.

The German positions south of the Korsun bulge took the full bombardment. Fourth Guards, Fifty-Third and Fifth Tank Armies struck at the heart of the German line. From the north of the bulge came the 1st Ukrainian Front. By 28 January, it had met up with Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front, which had advanced from the south. Men of 5 .SS-Panzer-Division *Wiking* were among the 56,000 German troops trapped there. **Breakout**

Being the only Panzer unit in the pocket, *Wiking* spearheaded the operation to break out of the encirclement. Included under its orders at the time was an independent SS formation of Belgian volunteers, 5.SS-FreiwilligenSturmbrigade Wallonien, which would later become 28.SS-FreiwilligenGrenadier-Division Wallonien. The breakout was successful, but casualties were heavy — some 30,000 of the 56,000 German troops escaped. The *Wiking* Division lost all of its armour and much of its equipment in the process.

The remnants of the *Wiking* division fought on as a *Kampfgruppe*, before being transferred to Poland where they would form the nucleus of a new 5.SS-Panzer-Division *Wiking*.

Because it was out of the line, it missed the massive Soviet summer offensive known as Operation *Bagration*. Perhaps the most powerful military attack in history, *Bagration* smashed the German Eastern Front and virtually destroyed Army Group Centre. By the time *Wiking* was again in action, the Soviets had pushed all the way to the Vistula River and to Warsaw. Along with the 3.SS-Panzer-Division *'Ibtenkopf'* and the Army's 19th Panzer Division, *Wiking* fought to stem the Soviet advance, stabilizing the front along the line of the Vistula. As the vast Soviet wave of destruction rolled onwards towards Germany, north of the Carpathians, Hitler found himself obsessed with Hungary. *Wiking* was pulled from Warsaw in December 1944, and transferred south to relieve 60,000 German soldiers and more than 800,000 civilians trapped in the Hungarian capital, Budapest.

Attached to IV SS Panzer Corps, *Wiking* pushed forward for two weeks, but could not penetrate the massed Soviet armies which were besieging the city. Even though units of the Red Army were now in sight of the suburbs of the Hungarian capital, IV SS Panzer Corps received orders to shift position to the industrial and farming area of Szekesfehervar in the southwest. This is believed to have been on the personal orders of Hitler himself. It was from here that the next attempt to break the stranglehold on Budapest would be made. The overall loss of men and materiel to the *Wiking* and *Tbtenkopf* Divisions was bleeding the *Waffen*-SS formations dry. A slow countermove was set at naught by the strength of enemy fire, and the command post at Szekesfehervar had to be moved back and all resistance collapsed. The next attack was to be made by Sepp Dietrich's Sixth SS Panzer Army, withdrawn from the fighting in the Ardennes and moved across Europe to Hungary. On 25 March, the Soviet breakthrough was all but complete, and the next day the Soviets went into the final phase which was the drive into Austria. With the failure of the final attempt to relieve the city, *Wiking* was withdrawn into Austria, where it fought in the final battles to defend Vienna in 1945.

High priority was given to the defence of Vienna by the *Waffen*-SS, although there was nothing that even remotely compared with the defensive systems that had existed at

Budapest. Rearguard detachments of Sixth SS Panzer Army, with elements of *Wiking*, *Leibstandarte* and the 17th Infantry Division, set up frequent ambushes, mined roads and blew bridges to hold off the Soviet Army.

However, nothing could stop the Soviet juggernaut, and orders were given for the remnants of the division to retreat towards Graz. On the River Mur, the Soviets were waiting with cavalry and T-34 tanks. Those who survived the onslaught made for the American lines at Rastad, where they surrendered.

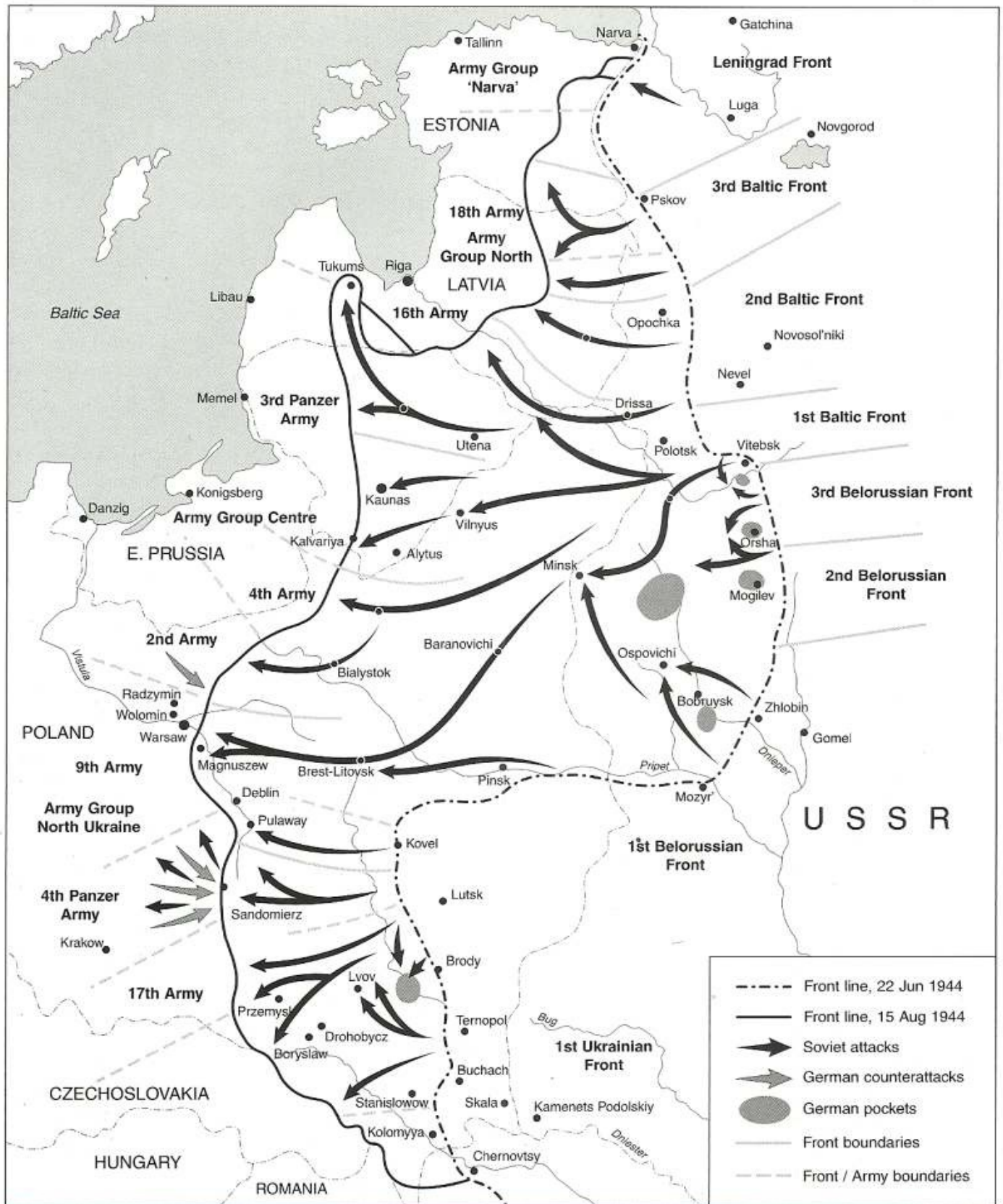
### **Germany in Defeat**

After a brief period of training for fresh reservists, the newly (partly)

equipped 5th SS-Panzer-Division *Wiking* made for Bialystok, northeast of Warsaw. The task was to blunt the steady advance of 2nd White Russian Front, the main burden of the battle falling at first on the men of *Westland*. Szyzowor was seized after a heavy opening bombardment, but after a day, the pattern was distressingly familiar. A counterattack was repelled but brought short-term relief. Russian manpower seemed to be inexhaustible; if one front sector held, then the enemy simply broke through to the left and right of it.



The greatest mass offeree was concentrated within Army Group Centre. Such a move was a recipe for disaster. Of the 38 divisions in the field, 28 were obliterated and 350,000 to 400,000 men were wounded, killed or missing. Vitebsk, regarded by Hitler as the most important of the fortified areas and which he vainly insisted on holding until the eleventh hour, was overrun; its destruction opened a breach in the German line more than 45km (28 miles) wide.



As it turned out, the needs of Bialystok were put on hold, since the forces of *Germania* and *Westland* had to be switched from one disaster area to another in the familiar 'fire brigade' role. Hopes were pinned on the 3rd SS Panzer-Division *Totenkopf*, rushed by train to the Eastern Front from the Romanian theatre with the armoured Paratroop Division *Hermann Goring*. The intention was to secure the city of Siedlice, 80 km (50 miles) east of Warsaw.

## New Panzer Corps



The Russians seemed to hold the cards, but not all had been entirely well with the Red Army. It had received a jolt when, on the river Vistula's right bank, the Soviet Second Tank Army was beaten in battle just a few miles from Warsaw at a cost of 3000 killed and 6000 prisoners, together with the loss of a good deal of armour. Volume IV of the Soviet history, *The Great Patriotic War* contains some frank criticism of its forces: 'The tempo of the offensive had greatly slowed down. The German High Command had by this time thrown some very strong reserves against the main sectors of our advance. German resistance was strong and stubborn. It should also be remembered that our rifle divisions and tank corps had suffered heavy losses in previous battles; that the artillery and supply bases were lagging behind, and that the troops were short of both petrol and ammunition. Infantry and tanks were not receiving nearly enough artillery support...'

In a state of exhaustion, the forces of 1st Belorussian Front under Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky faced the German bridgehead fronting Warsaw. Their lines of communication were stretched and men and materiel below strength. To exploit even these weaknesses in his enemy and to counter the defeat of Army Group 'North Ukraine' with its inevitable further grim consequences for Army Group Centre, Hitler proposed to strengthen his resources by harnessing the fighting prowess of *Totenkopf* units those of *Wiking*. The result, as decreed by Field Marshal Walther Model, was the creation of IV SS Panzer Corps, under the command of *SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS* (General) Herbert Gille. The corps was to include 3rd SS-Panzer-Division *Totenkopf* and 5th SS-Panzer-Division *Wiking*.

Gille was succeeded as *Wiking* commander first by *SS Oberführer* (Senior Colonel) Edmund Deisenhofer, then by *SS-Standartenführer* (Colonel) Johannes Rudolph Muhlenkamp, who had been formerly attached to *Germania* during the Polish campaign, and finally by *SS Standartenführer* Karl Ullrich.

Instructions given to *Wiking* by IV SS Panzer Corps called for the division to edge back from the bridgehead; to Brest-Litovsk (now Brest) on the Bug, followed by an immediate advance west to Warsaw. Its southern flank would then be screened against the pursuing enemy. A link there would be made with the *Totenkopf* units with assembling in the area of Siedlce as a component of IV SS Panzer Corps. A source of anxiety was the stream of enemy reinforcements assembling near the ancient town of Modlin which lay 30km (19 miles) north of Warsaw. The priority was to link up with other units assembled there and stem the tide. But nothing could stop the Russian spearheads driving on the heels of the German rearguards. Brest-Litovsk was lost on 23 July.

At first, communication with *Totenkopf* created problems before it was able to join the rest of the strength situated in the bridgehead in the Warsaw suburb of Praga on a line from Brest-Litovsk. Eight days later, Soviet armour thrust into Otwock and Radzymin, bringing the Russians to within 19km (12 miles) of the Polish capital, northeast and east of Praga on the Vistula's eastern bank. The area was a sheer fortress, a formidable array of pillboxes and fixed-firing positions, field fortifications, minefields, and strings of antitank and anti-infantry obstacles. Not only that but the Russians had stumbled into a vast concentration of German armour. In addition to *Wiking*, *Hermann Goring* and *Totenkopf* Divisions, there were two other panzer divisions, the 19th and the 4th. In trouble too was the Soviet XI Tank Corps which, while trying to throw the Germans out of the region of Siedlce to the east, was dangerously low on fuel and ammunition. In addition, Second Tank Army, coming up against the latest German heavy tanks, 'Royal' or 'King' Tigers, was feeling the

effect of considerable losses already sustained in the drive from Lublin.

In the area of Radzymin-Wolomin, northeast of Warsaw, the Russians fared better, pitching in with fighter-bomber assaults, the prelude to a bitter tank battle which caused *Westland* heavy casualties and forced the Division into a fighting withdrawal to the area of Malopole. By the end of August, there had been three vicious tank battles, with Malopole changing hands as many times. *Totenkopf* took the brunt of the action against an invigorated Soviet Eighth Army with 150-strong battery support. Nevertheless, the *Wiking Division* was able to establish a north-south solid wedge running from the Bug to Malopole. A decision was taken to send out reconnaissance patrols as near as possible to the Russian lines. The patrols reported signs of movement by the Russians in the area of Czarnow, and within hours enemy tanks were on the move making for a key German bridgehead at a point on the Bug. An attempt was made to counterattack but the Panzers were unable to advance over the unsuitable terrain and the attack failed. The 12 panzers and assault guns (*Sturmgeschutzen* or StuGs) involved in the attack were blown up after being stripped of weapons and equipment in the ignominious retreat. The Germans then quit the bridgehead. Casualties on both sides were heavy. The Russians lost five Sherman-type tanks and T-34s; seven others were rendered useless. This disaster was followed by a threat to an entire sector of the German corps, from the Vistula in the area of Zbytki to the Bug in the far north. In the early hours of 1 September the sector was covered by a heavy curtain of Russian fire that lasted a full hour. Resistance by the forces of *Westland* was puny, necessitating a series of withdrawals which allowed the Russians to establish another bridgehead at Pogozelec. Repeated attempts to reduce the bridgehead were to no avail, and it was enlarged when the Russian armour broke through from the north in the direction of Male. Here the familiar propaganda offensive was renewed with loud-speaker pleas to the *Waffen-SS* to surrender. Intelligence reached the division that the Russians were amassing 12-14 rifle divisions and other units for a drive through to the canal north of Praga. Their aim was to establish a bridgehead between Warsaw and the forests of Modlin. The interception of rations and other supplies parachuted into the area alerted the Germans to the presence of partisan bands lurking in the surrounding forests. The manpower situation of IV SS Panzer Corps was such that, for effective opposition to any attack, it would be necessary to depend upon yet more reservists. But most were so green that additional training was required. This could only be carried out by withdrawing individual units from the front line, and they could not be spared. The Red Army had sprung northwards and captured Praga, which became the scene of intense street-fighting. The Russians, conscious of the strains suffered by their armour, had not committed themselves initially to a tank assault. Infantry came in first to reconnoitre and the price of their caution was an assault from the *SS-Totenkopf* Division, many of whom were gaunt and fatigued zombies who had held out for as long as possible.

#### **‘HOME ARMY’ UPRISING**

By then Warsaw was deep in its own very personal war; resistance lighters of the Polish ‘Home Army’ (*Armija Krajowa*, AK) began what was to be a 63-day struggle against the occupying German garrison. At first the Germans had withdrawn precipitately, but within days they returned, announcing to the citizens of Warsaw that the city would be defended and civilian labour conscripted to build fortifications. The Russians rolled into defensive positions and the infantry dug in. The men of AK forthwith launched their own offensive inside Warsaw, waging war on German installations and key points. The tragedy of the

‘Warsaw Rising’ ran its course until the capitulation of the ‘Home Army’ on 2 October. As accounts of the Warsaw rising make clear, the insurrection was put down with horrific brutality by SS freebooters, working with the notorious *Dirlewangey* and *Kaminski* brigades. No units of *Wiking* were involved. The Russians remained on the banks of the Vistula until the Germans had crushed the rebellion. According to accounts, this was on the orders of Stalin to whom the AK was anathema, regarded as ‘power-seeking criminals’ loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London. A counter-argument pleaded that an advance by the Russians into Warsaw had not been an option, since by the time it faced the German defences in front of Warsaw, the 1st Belorussian Front was in a state of exhaustion. A few days’ respite had been necessary in order to receive major reinforcements in men and materiel.

### Change of Command

As far as *Wiking* was concerned, an important event on 9 October was a change in command for the Division when *SS-Standartenführer* (Colonel) Karl Ullrich, formerly a Pioneer Commander and Regimental Commander with the *Totenkopf Division*, succeeded *SS-Standartenführer* Johannes Rudolf Muhlenkamp. Ullrich’s speedy arrival at Corps headquarters in a flurry of dust from an armoured personnel carrier (*Schützenpanzerwagen*) had been dramatic. Radio intelligence had alerted the Germans to Russian plans for an attack on corps headquarters; the new commander and his staff huddled in the cellars. On the following day, the attack went ahead at Modlin, where Russian strength proved insufficient to envelop and destroy the SS divisions, and as a consequence the Soviets were obliged to call off their attack.<sup>6</sup>

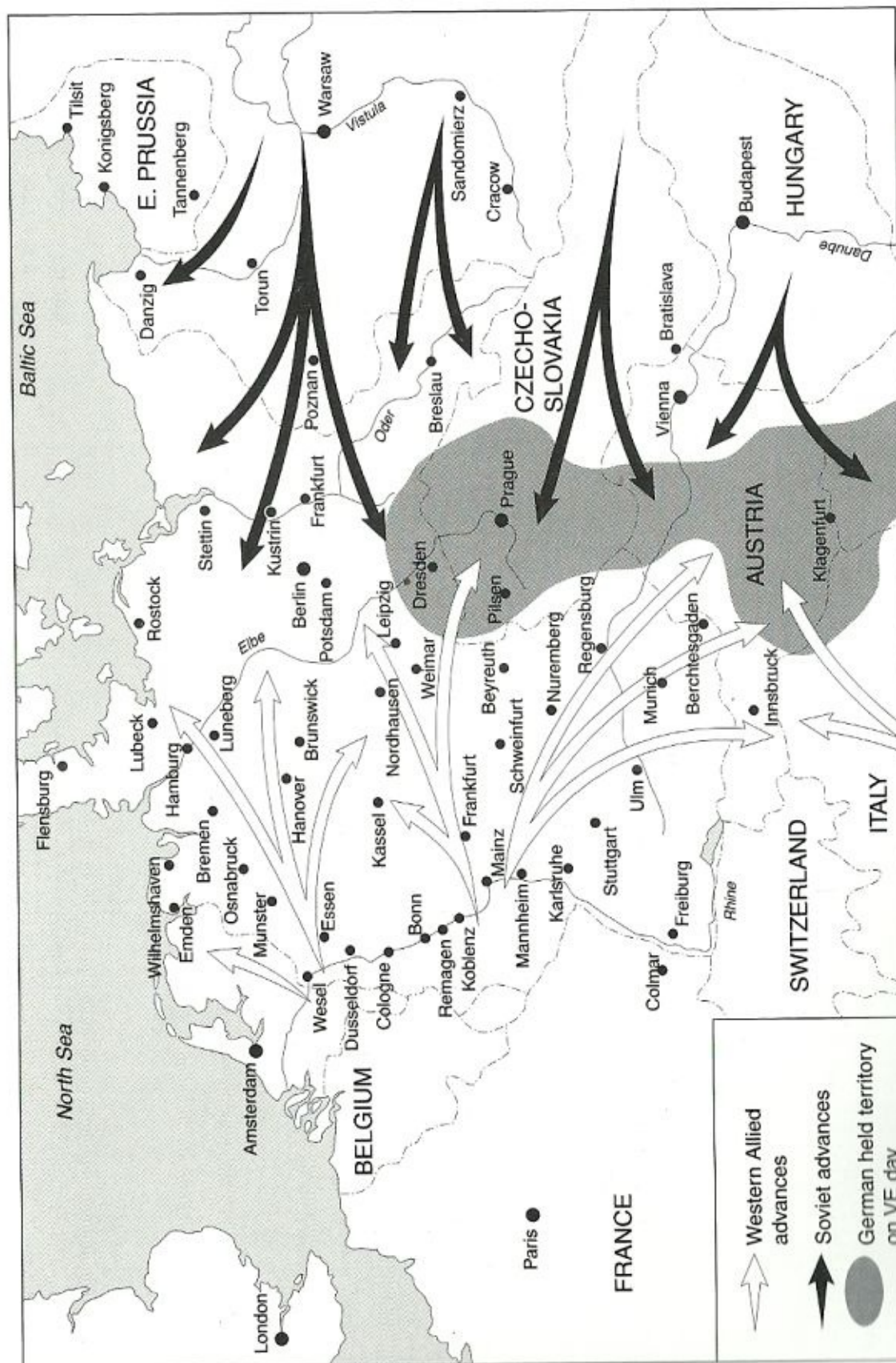


On the other hand, the infantry resources of *Wiking* were dwindling disastrously. Replacements garnered from the *Luftwaffe* proved to be more trouble than they were worth in the melee of ground warfare. The Russian tank riposte, when it came, involved T-34s and T-41s spread out over a 1km (1000 yd) wide front. But infantry support for the tanks was negligible. The Russians gingerly worked their way along their lines of advance, hugging roadside ditches which were sometimes hidden from view. With his gun crews under rifle and machine-gun fire, *Oberscharführer* (Sergeant) Schmalz edged two flak guns towards the concealed ditches and other points of cover. It took just a few bursts to rout the enemy and force them into retreat. The road to Modlin was kept open. At a point on the river Narew, the biggest tributary to the Vistula, the Division, which by then had been obliged to accept further raw recruits dropped by the *Luftwaffe*, was

defending a position running south along a section of the river's 485km (303-mile) length. It soon became clear that these forays by the Russians heralded the renewed offensive on Warsaw itself.

Divisional troops became hard-pressed in the neighbourhood of the railway line at Lotnisko, where the Russians launched a two-hour barrage prior to their main attack. With their Sherman tanks, the Red Army forces plunged deep into the surrounding forest area. A steel curtain of artillery fire rendered any communication impossible, let alone access into the sector. Ambulances sent to pick up the growing numbers of wounded were either destroyed or beaten back. Men of the *Westland* Regiment were pinned down in the cemetery abutting the forest. An eventual breakthrough was made by a tough infantry contingent of 1st Battalion of 5th SS Panzer Regiment charged with winning back those sections of the rail line which had been lost. At the end of one evening, only 40 out of 400 men had survived, the wounded being crammed painfully into a single personnel carrier. The eventual appearance of panzers provided a breathing space during the breakout, although they had a tough time battling through the unfriendly forest terrain.





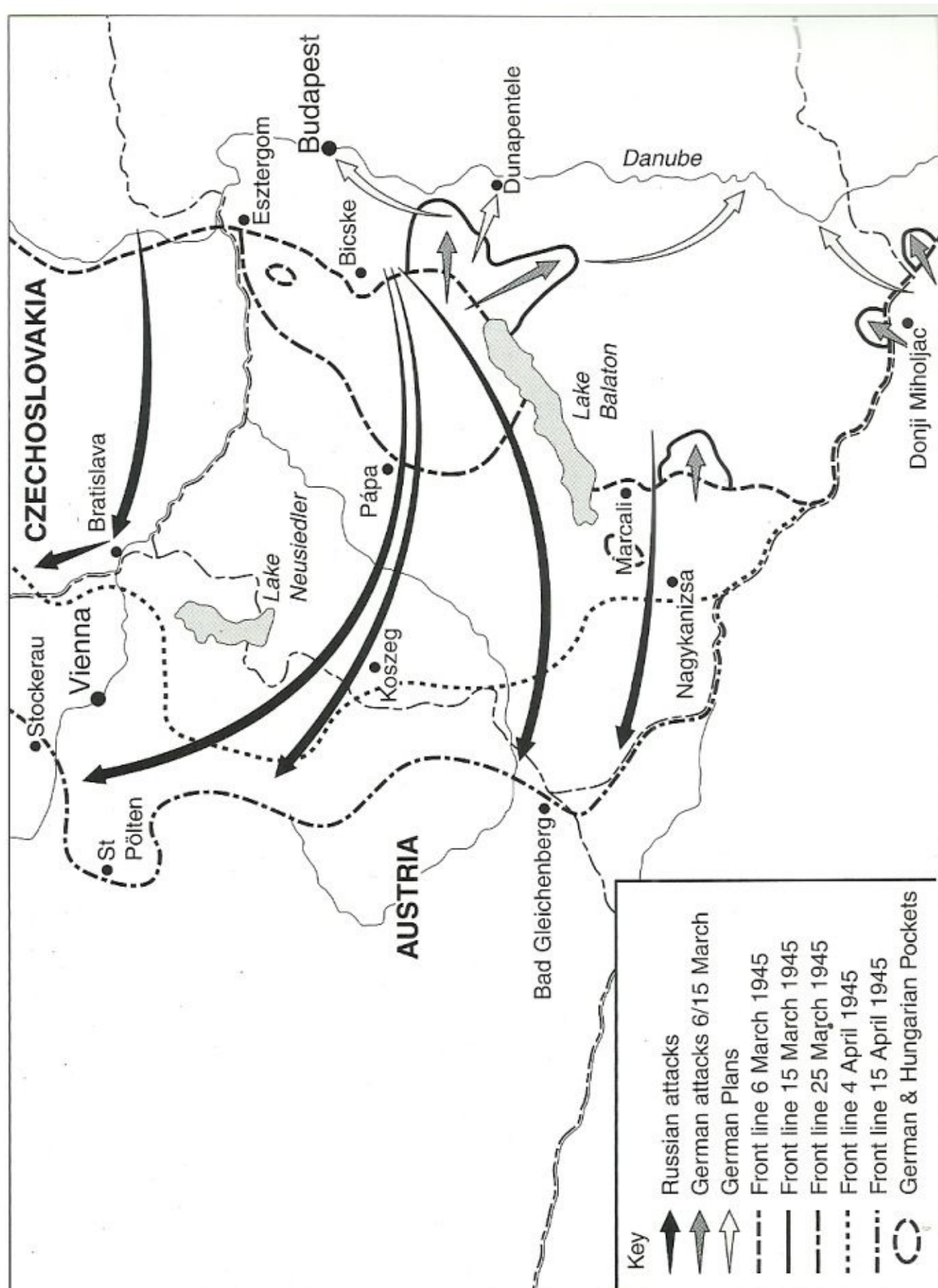
Around Warsaw itself, the Red Army had outrun its supply system and needed to gather strength before assaulting the German defences encircling the capital. The insurrection by the Polish 'Home Army' (AK) in Warsaw had cost 200,000 civilian and 15,000 AK lives. On 2 October the Poles capitulated. There were 10,000 dead among the 26,000 German casualties. With the Soviet offensive called to a halt, the Germans were able to crush the uprising. The surrender was signed by General Bor-Komorowski of AK. Warsaw was now

almost completely destroyed.

The Red Army had, back in late August, been busy to the far south, and had brought about the capitulation of Romania, thus enabling the Russians to occupy the key oilfields at Ploesti. The entire country was in Soviet hands by the end of the month. On 8 September the Soviet occupation of Bulgaria was underway. This month also marked the final exit from the war of the Finns, who for good measure turned on the German mountain troops who had refused to evacuate Finnish territory.

Hitler's attention had, perforce, to be switched to western Europe where, back at the end of July, the Americans had launched their drive to smash out of the Normandy bridgehead. Alas, he could not afford to have his attention distracted. As well as the advancing Russians, there loomed the problem of Germany's erstwhile ally, Hungary. Hitler, ensconced in the *Adlerhorst*, (his headquarters near Berlin from which he commanded the Ardennes offensive, was showing further danger signs of being stuck in a Stalingrad-like time warp. As the vast Soviet wave of destruction rolled onwards towards Germany north of the Carpathians, Hitler found himself obsessed with Hungary. An attempt made in early October by Admiral Miklos Horthy, Hitler's puppet there, to defect to the Soviet side was quickly foiled by the Germans. Horthy was then pressed to continued subservience through the kidnapping of his playboy son, Nikolaus. The next move was to imprison the 76-year-old admiral and replace him with Ferenc Szalasi, a committed fascist. Meeting with Hitler. Szalasi agreed that the capital, Budapest, must be held 'at any price'. This was only possible if Hitler removed units from the Ardennes Front to reinforce the defence of Budapest and the line of the Danube north and south of the city.

STAVKA ordered Marshal Theodor Ivanovich Tolbukin to prepare the forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front for the coming battle of Budapest. Stalin's order had been stark: 'Take Budapest as quickly as possible.' The response was quick; the Red Army advanced into Hungary and on Christmas Eve 1944 its tanks burst into the suburbs of Buda, striking towards the landmark of the Hotel Gellert. The late-night shoppers at first took it for granted that the tanks were German, but once the Red Stars were spotted, there was panic. The hitherto peaceful streets became battlegrounds as the German Tigers rumbled across the bridges of the Danube to close with the advancing armour of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, one of whose notable triumphs had been the active support of Marshal Tito in the capture of Belgrade the previous October.



The Russian forces, consisting of three assault groups of tank, motorized and cavalry units, advanced but were then repulsed. Simultaneously, the 2nd Ukrainian Front of Marshal Rodion Yakovievich Malinovsky was crossing the Danube above Budapest. Two days after Christmas, the two formations met west of the city. Five German and four Hungarian divisions, with 800,000 civilians, were cut off and surrounded. Emissaries went

forward to discuss the terms of capitulation.

To Hitler this was the ultimate heresy. There would be no capitulation. Budapest would be recaptured, not evacuated. This was never to be; the Russians' gigantic rocket assault blew apart the buildings and infrastructure of the ancient city, the onslaught orchestrated by the blare of Soviet loudspeakers urging the Hungarians to come out peacefully and join the Red Army. Those who had time pinned strips of red cloth to their uniforms. Others who did not were butchered.

In vain, General Heinz Guderian, the acting Army Chief of Staff, urged the *Fuhrer* to concentrate all his forces, including those withdrawn from the west after the debacle in the Ardennes, to defend the Oder. But Hitler, mesmerized above all by the threat to the oil resources around Lake Balaton, would have none of it. The fact that the oil wells were no longer able to supply sufficient oil even to meet the requirements of Army Group South was brushed aside. What was needed, the *Fuhrer* proclaimed, was 'the wider vision', adding: 'Hungary must be the objective. We will throw the Russians back across the Danube and then there will be other victories.' It was Hitler's intention that General O. Wohler's Army Group South would trap and destroy the 3rd Ukrainian Front between Lake Balaton and the Danube. The major thrust would be launched by Sepp Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army, now withdrawn from the Western Front. Dietrich would attack southeast from the northern end of Lake Balaton to a line on the Danube embracing Budapest-Baja. From south of the lake, advancing directly east, would come Second Panzer Army with a supporting attack to be launched northwards from the Yugoslavian border. Budapest would be taken and the Red Army front 'struck off the order of battle'. In his memoirs Guderian, with uncharacteristic mildness, summed up the bitter clash between himself and Hitler: 'I was sceptical, since very little time had been allowed for preparation, and neither the troops nor the commanders possessed the same drive as in the old days.' But argument with Hitler proved fruitless. An order from *Fuhrer* Headquarters (*Fuhrerhauptquartier, FHQ*) had reached the *Wiking* Division's command post near Modlin on Christmas night, sent, Guderian later maintained, without his knowledge. The personnel of IV SS Panzer Corps were to be transported forthwith by rail to the Komarom area. Here they were to relieve IX SS Mountain Corps of *SS-Gruppenfuhrer und GeneraUeutnant der Waffen-SS* (Lieutenant-General) Karl von Pfeffer-Wildenbruch, a veteran police general, who was now under threat from the encircling Soviet forces. The men of *Germania* and *Westland* scarcely had time to breath before they were formed into two battle groups. The toughest assignment went to *Germania*, ordered forthwith to institute a frontal attack in the direction of Budapest. In darkness, *Westland* was to form up behind *Germania*, holding the position firm while *Germania* stormed ahead with enemy antitank guns, assault groups, and tanks forming its target.

Opinion was divided on the wisdom, not only of a frontal attack, but also of tying down a panzer group and battle group in one location. The decision to send *Westland* at first light into what turned out to be a heavily opposed uphill attack was at first successful, but all too soon the battalions were pinned down by heavy fire. It was then proposed to assail the Russians' weakest positions in the Pilis mountains, situated to the north of Budapest on the right bank of the Danube. The mountain network of caves, steep cliffs and hairpin bends proved useful as outposts and strongpoints for the Red Army. Along the winding roads eventually was to be seen the detritus of a German Army retreating in defeat, lorries and trucks abandoned, along with weapons and equipment. Marauding Soviet troops used



the debris as cover.

Even though units of the Red Army were now in sight of the suburbs of the Hungarian capital, IV SS Panzer Corps received orders to shift position to the industrial and farming area of Szekesfehervar in the southwest. This is believed to have been on the personal orders of Hitler himself. It was from here that the next attempt to break the stranglehold on Budapest would be made. *SS-Obergruppenfuhrer* (General) Gille, who from the beginning had been opposed to using Szekesfehervar as an operational base, had his fears confirmed when it became evident that the Russians had anticipated the move and heavily mined the area, resulting in a distinct lack of progress for the Germans. Nevertheless, Ullrich, as *Wikings* commander, urged forward the armoured group of *SS-Obersturmbannfuhrer* (Lieutenant-Colonel) Hans Dorr of *Gennania*, and by the evening they had broken through at a point where Russian manpower was thin on the ground.

A briefing at *Germania's* command post in Sarosd, earlier wrested from Russian hands, resulted in a serious loss to the Division. A direct hit by an antitank shell killed several officers, and severely wounded Hans Dorr, who later died of his injuries. This incident dented the morale of the division which, fortuitously, was restored by the capture of Szekesfehervar, at a time when the Russian Fifty-Seventh Guards Army had been chronically short of reinforcements and munitions. But nothing seemingly could now stop the final Russian assault on Budapest which was launched at around 07:00 hours on 29 January 1945 and, so it was rumoured, was likely to be hindered only by one battered cavalry division. The overall loss to *Wiking* and *Totenkopf* men and materiel was bleeding the *Waffen-SS* dry. A slow countermove was set at naught by the strength of enemy fire, and the command post at Szekesfehervar had to be moved back. All resistance collapsed. As a contributor to *History of the Second World War*, the American historian Earl K. Ziemke wrote:

‘On the morning of February 11, Pfeffer-Wildenbruch issued orders for a breakout. In a gesture reminiscent of Paulus’ promotion to Field-Marshal at Stalingrad, Hitler had conferred the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross on him the day before. But the garrison was down to its last rations and ammunition, and split into two pockets, both too small for airdrops. On the night of the 11 th the troops tried to force their way out along the Italian Boulevard while the staffs took a roughly parallel route through a subterranean drainage channel. Few even reached the suburbs. Of close to 30,000 Germans and Hungarians - 10,600 wounded were left behind - less than 700 reached the German lines.’



**No relief**

In a rapid advance the Russians had encircled Szekesfehervar and from Hitler came the by

now characteristically intransigent demand: 'Szekesfehervar is to be defended without regard for losses; the combat commander responsible is the commander of *Westland*.' Pleas for relief were impossible; contact could not be made with *Wiking* divisional HQ, which was situated some 18km (11 miles) west of Szekesfehervar. A reconnaissance regimental cycle platoon reported that encirclement of the town by the Russians was virtually complete. Then in recognition that obedience of the *Fuhrer* order would amount to a death sentence for *Wiking*, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Gille at IV SS Panzer Corps authorized a withdrawal westwards together with the wounded. The Soviets' steamroller advance had found *Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant-Colonel) Franz Hack of *Westland* in the thick of it: 'In the course of the day, the Soviet Russians attack us frontally, supported by artillery and "Stalin organ" fire. The battle rages in and around the little town of Seregelyes ... We captured a complete "Stalin organ" with tractor and ammunition. Our men from the artillery and infantry gun units under *Hauptsturmführer* [Captain] Peter Wollseifer, turn the multiple mortar around and soon the Soviet Russians get a taste of area bombardment from their own rocket weapon.'

A key role in the withdrawal was played by 9th SS-Panzer-Division *Hohenstaufen*, which had also originally been recruited from foreign volunteers. It shifted its front to the northern part of Lake Balaton in order to hold the sector open for the *Wiking* Division. Within hours, the latter was able to find the protection of *Hohenstaufen*'s front. All points west were jammed, and powerful motorized forces encountered nothing more lethal than infantry small arms and several meagre supplies of ammunition. The launch of Hitler's offensive, codenamed 'Spring Awakening', had begun on 18 February when I and II SS Panzer Corps entrained from Wiesbaden, Koblenz and Bonn. Hitler had summoned smartly uniformed reserve forces which seemingly had a call on the most sophisticated weapons. But assembly was one thing; fast movement another. The progress of the new reserve formations had been much hindered by Allied air attacks and fuel shortages, so it was not until the beginning of March that Sepp Dietrich was able to assemble his forces between Lakes Balaton and Velence. As well as two panzer corps, Sixth SS Panzer Army also had under its command two cavalry divisions and *Wiking* and *Totenkopf* of IV SS Panzer Corps, and a Hungarian infantry division. The plan was for the main attack to be made on 6 March with Sixth Army under General Hermann Balck, with Dietrich's 6<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer Army on his right. Subsidiary attacks on the day before would be the responsibility of Army Group JE across the Drava and Second Panzer Army to the south of Lake Balaton. As to the fate of Sixth SS Panzer Army, Sepp Dietrich later recounted: 'My left flanks [II SS Panzer Corps] had no success worth mentioning. The emplacements along the western bank of the Danube, the hard strong enemy, and the marshy terrain, impassable for tanks, prevented our advancing and attaining our goal ... The centre [I Panzer Corps and the cavalry divisions] reported good success; yet when tanks were employed to exploit the initial successes, the terrain proved completely impassable. The terrain, which was supposed to be frozen hard, and which General von Wohler had maintained to be passable, was wet and marshy ...'



Sixth SS Panzer Army was equipped with the MkVT Tiger II heavy battle tank - the 'Royal' or 'King' Tiger - massively armoured and mounting an 88mm (3.46 in) gun. In addition, more than 600 tanks and self-propelled guns were in support of this bid to batter through the Soviet lines of Lake Velence. All this weaponry, however sophisticated, proved useless, and the burnt-out hulks were left stranded in the waterlogged plains. There was a general consensus that the 'Royal' Tigers had proved irrelevant; a sarcastic comment by the troops was that Hitler's *Schnorkel-equipped* Uboats would have been better. The coup de grace was delivered by Russia's artillery and attack aircraft. The failure of the SS in Hungary caused consternation. Hitler, according to Guderian, who heard it from Wohler, was 'beside himself and sent Himmler to find out what had gone wrong. The Fuhrer, according to some accounts, remained obsessive about regaining the oilfields, until he was shown an aerial photograph depicting the sites as nothing but bomb craters. Surprisingly, perhaps, despite the fact that the entire Eastern Front was as good as lost, morale among SS troops apparently remained high, as did the sense of discipline and spirit of comradeship. *Wiking* Division's *SSObersturmführer* (Lieutenant) Eric Brorup recalled:

'My most memorable encounter took place on St Patrick's Day, 17 March 1945, near Szekesfehervar in Hungary. I was adjutant ... to *SS-Sturmbannführer* [Major] Fritz Vogt, holder of the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves. The Russians had started their offensive the day before, which was also Fritz Vogt's 27th birthday. Our unit was *SS-Panzer Auftrags Abteilung 5*.

I had established a command post in a small house and set up communications with a switchboard and radio while shells fell all around us. *SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS* [General] Herbert Otto Gille telephoned to congratulate Vogt on his birthday and to tell him he had just been awarded the Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross. His face lit up and I said: "This calls for a drink!" We hoisted a few, then the supply officers showed up bearing some bottles of beer, and all the other officers found time to show up for a quick drink. All the while the war was going on. around us.

One company commander was having some trouble with the enemy, so I suggested to Vogt that I go out and try to straighten things out. Vogt laughed and said: "What's the matter with you, do you feel like a hero today?" I answered that he had just got himself a new medal and should let others have a chance to win one. He replied: "Okay, but watch what you are doing!" By this time, of course, we had all had a good drink and were in excellent spirits!

I got an SdKfz 250/9 (a half track armoured personnel carrier with 20mm [0.79in] cannons mounted) and went into battle. We were firing high-explosive shells and it seemed easy, like shooting fish in a barrel. Then the Russians brought up an antitank rifle and shot up my vehicle, forcing us to bail out. We ended up in hand-to-hand combat with them. I had a *Panzerfaust* antitank rocket but it wouldn't fire. I therefore used it like a club and cracked one Russian's head with it. I was in trouble, though. However, Fritz Vogt then appeared with a few more armoured personnel carriers and got me out. He told me to take a couple of hours off, and later he and I went off alone on a reconnaissance behind enemy lines. I got the Iron Cross First Class for all this ...'

Allegations of collaboration in World War II can will act as raw nerves on the conscience of nations. Palatable or not, the truth is that thousands of willing youngsters from subjugated countries served Nazi Germany in the various echelons of the *Waffen-SS* ('Armed SS'). At the outbreak of war, figures were negligible. By its end, foreigners outnumbered native Germans in its ranks. There were many young men who, disillusioned by the helplessness of their governments in the face of defeat, were driven to seek a focus for their lives which they saw as being without purpose. *SS-Obergruppenführer* (General) Felix Steiner, who became the first commander of the *Waffen-SS* Division "Wiking", wrote that 'all these psychological factors and their concern about the future destiny of their homelands combined at this time to lead a part of the youth to make the decision to enter the German *Wehrmacht* as volunteers.' Of the men themselves, he added: 'They observed the good behaviour and discipline of the German troops and began to make comparisons that did not turn out to be unfavourable for the Germans.' At the immediate post-war Nuremberg trials, a Herr Brill, a former *SS-Mann* (pre-war rank of private) in the *Leibstandarte*, who later served in the *Erganzungs Ami*, which enrolled *Waffen-SS* recruits, stated:

'In my office, I read thousands upon thousands of applications for admission. I can say that up to 1939 the enthusiasm for the SS, for its decent and proper conduct, was the main reason for volunteering. The men wanted to do their military service in a clean, modern, elite formation.'

7





## Glittering promises

But this told only half the story. The truth was that at a material level, the benefits of working for the SS were often tangible. Pay and allotments for foreigners were comparable with that of the Germans. There were attractive inducements to look to the future once the war had been won, glittering promises of civil service preferment and grants of land. These were motives enough, but there were also those who had an ideological commitment to National Socialism which they felt could best be expressed through service in the SS. From the German viewpoint, there was a strictly practical reason in planning for a rapid expansion of *Waffen-SS* manpower from outside the *Reich*. There was a severe shortage of personnel due to the *Wehrmacht*'s niggardly release of native German volunteers whom it had recruited and wished to retain for itself. As World War II grew ever nearer, the SS was compelled to look elsewhere for the personnel to man new field divisions. Whatever the reasons, the courtship of the youth of occupied countries worked well. Heinrich Himmler had every reason to be a wholly satisfied individual. In an address to senior officers at Posen on 4 October 1943, the *Reichsführer-SS* was justified in describing his *WaffenSS* expansion as 'nothing less than fantastic', achieved 'at an absolutely terrific speed'.

The figures, Himmler declared, spoke for themselves. In 1939, the *WaffenSS* had consisted solely of 'a few regiments, guard units, 8000 to 9000 strong - that is, not even a division; all in all, 25,000 to 28,000 men at the most.' World War II had scarcely been a year old before that strength had reached nearly 150,000. With a six-fold increase in manpower, the *Waffen-SS* was now established as 'the fourth branch of the *Wehrmacht*'.

## Rapid build-up

By 1940, the SS stood at four divisions. This history is concerned with *SSWiking* Division, the 5th Division, whose personnel during the war comprised not only German nationals but also those of Flemish, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and Finnish origin.

At first, these divisions had been little more than scattered battalions of the *SS-Verfügungstruppen* ('General Purpose Troops'), or *SS-VT*, which was later renamed the *Waffen-SS*. Then followed their conversion into regiments, one of which was *Germania*, a future component of the division *SS-Wiking*. The breakdown of the west European or 'Germanic' SS, many of whom swelled the ranks of *Wiking*, is given by George H. Stein in his book *Waffen-SS*, as follows:

‘... some 50,000 Dutch (making up the largest group); 40,000 SS men being provided by Belgium, almost evenly divided between Flemings and Walloons; 20,000 from France with Denmark and Norway each producing around 6000 men. Another 1200 came from such countries as Switzerland, Sweden and Luxembourg. The figure of those serving from Finland, the least committed of the *Wajfm-SS*, has been put at 1000, but various accounts differ.’

The build-up was fast, all the more remarkable when it is remembered that in the early years of the Weimar Republic, the *Schutzstaffel* (SS - Protection Squad) had been little more than the crude repository for bouncers and street-fighters of the fledgling Nazi party. Its power base had been strengthened irrevocably by the overthrow of a serious rival, the *Sturmabteilung* (SA — Storm troopers) in a bloody coup - which would later be called ‘The Night of the Long Knives’ - during the summer of 1934.

### **Himmler’s obsession**

The hour from then on belonged to *Reichsfuhrer-SS* Heinrich Himmler.

The Munich-born former chicken farmer, son of a secondary schoolmaster looked, with his pebble spectacles and prissily didactic manner, every inch the painfully conscientious, unimaginative clerk destined to languish without promotion in some public service backwater. But it was a mistake to assume that this was the whole man. Concealed underneath the mundane exterior was something else: a dangerous individual who had embraced the pseudo-mystic trappings of the Nazi creed, root and branch.<sup>8</sup>



Himmler saw in the black uniform of his SS the symbol of an imagined earlier Germany of supermen and hunters, men who lived by the dagger, products of a twilight world of ferocious guards, Teutonic knights and lionhearted heroes. The very choice of the name *Wiking* for an SS division had been seen by many as staking a claim to one of those lands in the northern twilight, a home of pagan gods whose beginnings could be traced in the ancient runes. Carried away by an obsession which was rivalled only by his hatred of the



ever-proliferating Jews, Himmler even spoke in glowing terms of the day when millions of Germans living in America would be members of the SS.



He did not, however, permit his racial preoccupations to interfere with his own ceaseless pursuit of power.<sup>9</sup> This, he realized, was a commodity Which had to be shared with Hitler himself who, first and foremost, perceived the SS as both a private army and a personal

police force. This was in accordance with the words of the Organization Book of (he NSDAP (National Socialist or Nazi Part)): 'The original and most important duty of the SS is to serve as the protector of the *Führer*.' But the *Reichsführer-SS* was keen to point out: 'By decree of the *Führer* the sphere of duties has been enlarged to include the external security of the *Reich*.' No further definition of 'external security' was forthcoming then but, despite the vagueness of the phrasing, a future military role clearly seemed to be the intention. This had been confirmed by Hitler as early as 1934: 'It will be necessary in future wars for our SS and police, in their own closed units, to prove themselves at the front in the same way as the army and to make blood sacrifices to the same degree as any other branch of the armed forces.'

## **Conscription introduced**

For existing members of the SS, increasing career opportunities were intended in part as something of a reward for their role during the anti-SA putsch in 1934. The early elements of the *SS-Verfügungstruppen* were three regiments, each containing three battalions, as well as a mortar company and a motorcycle company which were supported by a signals battalion.

A meagre affair, certainly. But how it would shape in the future was indicated when Hitler announced in the Reichstag that conscription would be introduced and the *SS-Verfügungstruppen* would be the recipient of the highest possible standard of training. Two former army officers, Paul Hausser and Felix Steiner, were recruited in order to implement this policy.

The post of inspector of the *SS-Verfügungstruppen* (SS-VT) went to Hausser and with it the rank of *SS-Brigadeführer* (Major-General). Hausser was a career soldier with scant time for Himmler's racial fantasies. His sole concern was turning out rock-hard troops in defence of a modern state. After service in World War I, Hausser had retired with the rank of Lieutenant-General only one year before Hitler came to power. Originally he had thrown in his lot with the SA, but, having survived the bloodbath of 'The Night of the Long Knives', he adroitly changed his rank from *SA-Standartenführer* (Colonel) to the equivalent in the SS.

When it came to actual SS-VT training, *SS-Sturmabführer* (Major) Felix Steiner, a charismatic personality who had served as a junior artillery officer in World War I, seemed an obvious choice. He too had spotted what he saw as an opportunity to further himself once the Nazis had secured power. Quitting the army with the rank of Colonel and transferring to the SS, Steiner had no intention of being confined within armed outfits created solely to counter internal unrest. He recalled: 'I was among those who frequently plotted to set up a field force of a rather different nature. In doing this we felt we could thereby contribute to Germany's security in the international sense.'

The main stumbling block, as Hausser saw it, was Himmler himself, whom he came to dismiss as 'an out-and-out policeman of the repressive kind and who had no real idea at all of military matters'. Nevertheless, even the mildest suggestion that the *Reichsführer-SS* was being sidelined could prove a dangerous move; both Hausser and Steiner sensed the need to take some of Himmler's prejudices on board. Thus any recruit for the *WaffenSS*, while allowed some degree of choice as to which branch of service he favoured, had to be between the ages of 17 and 22. Older aspirants were accepted only in exceptional circumstances. Candidates had to 'have an acceptable political outlook' and 'provide



evidence of an Aryan origin back to 1800', or even earlier if they were officer candidates.

### **Absolute power**

Such stipulations were luxuries that were only "practical in time of peace.

With the coming of war and a decline in fortunes, strict criteria inevitably became relaxed and eventually were dispensed with altogether. This applied also to foreign 'Germanic' volunteers with height restrictions being lowered to a minimum 1.65m (5ft 5in). The proof of Aryan descent was cut to just two generations. However, this by no means applied to volunteers from some countries who were required to serve the *Waffen-SS* for a fixed term under contract, a source of great relief to those fresh-faced recruits whose sense of idealism withered once they themselves had experienced the horrific privations of fighting on the Eastern Front. But in one respect, Steiner and Hitler agreed. Here was a great opportunity to demonstrate that whatever the conservative die-hards of the Army could do, the SS could do even better. Given this imprimatur, recruitment for a perceived new and elite force went on apace. In a Germany that had suffered such severe economic privations under the Weimar Republic, the chance of employment and the attendant restoration of national pride were not to be gainsaid. This explained the growth both in stature and in numbers of the SS units which, up to 1936, had been but scattered battalions. At first, its candidates had been a disparate bunch. These men were generally ex-officers from World War I who had nowhere to go, as well as rankers, policemen and plain adventurers, not forgetting the mere hangers-on. From this uneven and often dubious material, Hausser and Steiner hammered into shape the men who would form the officer and NCO cadres of the future *Verfügungstruppen*.

By the time of the attack on Poland on 1 September 1939, the men of the SS-VT, who had been shipped to East Prussia, were organized into regimental combat groups. It was after the invasion of western Europe between 10 and 20 May 1940 that Himmler seized the initiative. Beside those engaged in the practicalities of fighting a war, the *Reichsführer-SS* stood as a creature apart. He continued to dream dreams, his major obsession being to attract the purest Nordic blood of Europe into his SS. With his imagination soaring as he poured over his eternal files, he was envisaging what he believed would ultimately become the Germanic province of 'Burgundia', consisting of the Netherlands, Belgium and north-east France. Germany itself would be protected by this bulwark, with the SS possessing absolute power. In pursuit of this dream, he ensured that members of the *Allgemeine-SS* (General SS) were in place in the captured territories of Flanders, Holland and Norway. An order went out to General Gottlob Berger, a wily and persuasive Swabian who was head of the SS main leadership office, and a specialist on racial selection for the SS. He was to intensify his efforts to gain foreign recruits for the new *Wiking Division*. It was no easy task. The straight-laced echelons of the *Wehrmacht* were at best, unenthusiastic at the prospect of a 'second army' and at worst downright obstructive. The solution lay with Himmler, who happened to hold the post of *Reichskommissar für die Festigung Deutscher Volkstums* (Reich Commissar for the Strengthening of 'Germandom'). With powerful connections among Germans living abroad, the *Reichsführer-SS* was able to activate contacts over a wide field, thus bypassing normal military restrictions on recruiting abroad. Not least among the advantages of all this for Berger was that such volunteers would not be required to serve in the German Armed Forces. And there was nothing whatever that the *Wehrmacht* could do

about it. Western volunteers for the *Waffen-SS* were left in no doubt as to where the power lay, as Himmler made clear: 'Be certain of this. There will be in Europe just one SS — the German SS under the command of the *Reichsführer-SS*. You can resist, but that is a matter of indifference to me for we will create it in any case. We do not ask you to turn against your country, nor to do anything repugnant to anyone proud of his country, who loves it and has his self-respect. Neither do we expect you to become Germans out of opportunism. What do we ask is that you subordinate your national ideal to a superior racial and historical ideal, that of the single and all-embracing Germanic Reich,'

### New regiments

With the formation of *Wiking*, which was one of the leading foreign divisions of the *Waffen-SS*, *SS-Gruppenführer* (Lieutenant-General) Felix Steiner became its first commander. There were two new regiments, *Nordland* (consisting of Danes and Norwegians) and *Westland* (Flemish and Dutch). The new division was at first called *Germania* but, since there was a *Germania* regiment already, and this was causing confusion, the title was changed to *Wiking*.

Where *Nordland* was concerned, Himmler had an enthusiastic acolyte. This was Vidkun Quisling who, before the war, had served as a minister in the Norwegian Government and was a recipient of an honorary Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Subsequently, Quisling resigned to create the Norwegian Fascist Party and it was he who on 13 January 1941 appealed over the Norwegian radio for 3000 volunteers for the regiment. They would, he declared, be joining 'the war of freedom and independence against English world despotism'. The original upper age limit of 25 for recruitment was forthwith raised to 40, and Himmler lost no time in flying to Oslo to inspect the enthusiastic new recruits and officiate at their swearing in. After mustering, they were sent to Wurttemberg in southern Germany in order to train with the rest of the regiment in simulated battle conditions. Some of the new recruits were even able to experience the real thing; they were seconded to other SS units engaged in the Balkans.



Because of the urgent need to recruit more manpower for the war effort, the Nordic

volunteers enjoyed less stringent service conditions than the Germans. This particularly galled Himmler with his goal of total loyalty from all his adherents, but pride had to be sacrificed in favour of sheer necessity. The Nordics were permitted to join on a 'hostilities only' basis, rather than the usual four-year term. Even the initial height restriction of 1.65m (5ft 5in) was waived and the oath of loyalty was modified in recognition of the fact that the appeal among the volunteers was to nationalism rather than National Socialism, with the main aim being the destruction of Communism. But they received broadly the same pay and, with national distinctions, wore the same uniform as the regulars.

### **Sinister directive**

Elsewhere, Himmler was unstoppable. It had seemed to the *ReichsführerSS* that the Dutch would be able to provide him with excellent racial material and in the summer of 1940 he had established the Regiment *Westland* which was to be open to volunteers from the Netherlands and Flanders. A recruiting initiative was launched with a leaflet entitled 'The *Waffen-SS* is Calling - You Too Should Protect Your Home Country'. It proclaimed: 'It would be absurd if you did not start lighting the enemy before he brutally demands entrance at the garden gate. This is not possible in a local war, and least possible at a time when continents are in revolt. Imagine a border landscape covered with snowdrifts and, breaking from the east, packs of ravaging wolves which exterminate every kind of life. 'Does not this picture fit the present time as well?

'Who does not want to annihilate the ravaging beasts who are breaking into their homeland? Do you mean simply to stand at the garden gate of your own home country? Then it will be too late. Happy the country that keeps the war far away from its boundaries and does not hesitate to make sacrifices in blood to save the fatherland.'

Rabble-rousing sentiment contrasted with other pronouncements infinitely more sinister. A directive was issued to all *Waffen-SS* members, the text of which survived to surface at the Nuremberg Trials: 'Obedience must be unconditional. It corresponds to the conviction that National Socialist ideology must reign supreme ... Every SS man is therefore prepared to carry out blindly every order issued by the Führer or given by his superior, regardless of the sacrifice involved.' Neither was the avowedly racist ethos of the Armed SS in any way shirked. The SS was conceived as a Nazi aristocracy, as a new ruling class to create 'the New Order' which would consist of a National Socialist Military Order of Nordic Men, a fighting force '... bound by ideological oaths, whose fighters are selected from the best Aryan stock'. The predominant enemies were the Jews and the Bolsheviks. The campaign worked. The *Reichsführer-SS* felt sufficiently encouraged by the enthusiastic response from volunteers to raise yet another regiment, *SS-Nordwest*. But Himmler tempered his enthusiasm with self-interested caution. Such volunteers, he declared, would remain firmly under central Nazi control, lest there be any hint of dissent in their ranks. Thus they were required to affirm the oath of loyalty to the *Waffen SS*: '*I swear to you Adolf Hitler, as leader, loyalty and courage. I pledge to you and to those you place in authority over me obedience even unto death. So help me God.*' *Nordwest* as a regiment, it turned out, was to last until the German invasion of Russia, when it was deemed to have served its purpose. It survived in battalion form, with the bulk of its strength re-allocated to other Dutch or Flemish units of the *Waffen-SS*.

At first, there were noticeable gaps in the ranks once the first volunteers had been swallowed up. Then Reich Germans and ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) were drafted in.

The result was that by the time of the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, *Wiking* contained 1142 Germanic volunteers: 630 Dutchmen, 294 Norwegians, 216 Danes, 1 Swede and 1 Swiss. In the same year would be added *Nordest*, a battalion consisting of Finns. Golllob Berger worked hard in the cold land of Finland. Hatred and fear of Russia were played upon. Enquiries in pro-German Finnish circles revealed there were enough men in the country to form at least one *Waffen-SS* battalion. Subterfuge was necessary; the 1000 Finns who went to Germany did so as 'workers for the German war industry'. The Finns were known to be a fiercely independent people; tactful treatment by Germany was therefore necessary; 'Guidelines for the behaviour of troops in Finland' was prepared. The document proclaimed: 'The Finn is a member of a cultured people, feeling strong associations to the other Scandinavian peoples, proud of his achievements and with a distinct sense of national pride. The freedom and independence of his country are valued above all. His friendliness towards Germans is genuine. ... anything that could hurt his national pride has to be avoided and his military achievement in particular has to be acknowledged.'

The Finnish reaction was lukewarm. The government made the stipulation that they would only fight Russians. The Army refused to take the *WaffenSS* oath or be commanded by German officers. The upshot of the wrangling was that, by the start of 'Operation Barbarossa', 400 men were seconded to 5th *SS-Wiking*.

Thus were the endeavours of Himmler and Berger rewarded, but Hitler's preoccupations remained elsewhere, beyond even the impending campaign in the West. The invasion of the Soviet Union loomed ever nearer in the calculation of the supreme commander.

## **Order of Battle**

Formed on 11/9/42 by the renaming of the SS Division "Wiking" while it was serving in Southern Russia as the SS Panzergrenadier Division "Wiking." It had:

1./2./3./SS Panzergrenadier Regiment "Germania"

1./2./SS Panzergrenadier Regiment "Nordland"

1./2./3./SS Panzergrenadier Regiment "Westland"

SS Panzer Battalion "Wiking"

1./2./3./4./5th SS Artillery Regiment

SS Panzerjäger Battalion "Wiking"

SS Reconnaissance Battalion "Wiking"

SS Flak Battalion "Wiking"

SS Pioneer Battalion "Wiking"

SS Signals Battalion "Wiking"

SS Feldersatz Battalion "Wiking"

SS Division Support (Einheiten) "Wiking"

On 3/29/43 the two panzer grenadier regiments both formed three battalions, and a schützen regiment with two battalions was organized. The Nordland Regiment was detached in the summer of 1943 to join the 11th SS Panzergrenadier Division Nordland. When the Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS was stood down in March of 1943, and disbanded in June and July of the same year, the Estnisches SS-Freiwilligen Bataillon Narwa (Estonian) was used to replace the Finns as the third Battalion of the SS-Panzergrenadier Regiment Nordland. The Estonians stayed with the Wiking Division when the Nordland Regiment was detached to become the nucleus of a new division. The



Estonians attached to Wiking were actually one of three battalions then forming up at the Heidelager SS-Truppenübungsplatz (training ground) in Debica, Poland, in early 1943 as the 1. Estnische SS-Frw. Grenadier Regiment. They lost the 1st (Narwa) Battalion, but later acquired sufficient manpower to constitute the 3rd SS-Freiwilliger Brigade (45th & 46th SS-Freiwilliger Regiments) before being formed into a full SS-Grenadier division in January 1944. In October 1943, the Wiking was reorganized as a panzer division. The Estonians became 3/10th SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment Westland. By April of 1944 the Narwa Battalion would be detached from Wiking and renamed 20th SS-Fusilier-Battalion, part of the Estonian 20. SS-Freiwilliger Grenadier Division. During its time with Wiking Division the Estonian battalion was commanded by the German SS-Sturmbannführer Georg Eberhardt. Reports of the battalion's strength vary, but it may have been as high as 1,280 men when attached to SS Panzer-grenadier Regiment Westland. The honorific title Narwa was also reported to have been unofficially continued as part of its new SS Fusilier Battalion designation.

The Panzer Regiment was increased to two battalions and a new Sturmgeschütz battalion was raised. On 7/1/43 the division's panzer battalion and panzer inventory were as follows:

1/5th SS Panzer Regiment 1 Panzer Staff Company

1 Medium Panzer Company

2 Light Panzer Companies

Mk II.....4

Mk III (50 kz) ..... 1

Mk III (50 Ig)..... 14

Mk III (75)..... 8

Mk IV (kz)..... 1

Mk IV (Ig)..... 16

Cmd.....1

On 8/9/43 the OKH ordered twelve Wespe self-propelled 105mm guns sent to the division.

In August 1943 the division was organized and equipped as follows:

#### **Division Staff**

1 Division Staff (2 LMGs)

1 (mot) Mapping Detachment

1 (mot) "KB" Detachment

1 (mot) Escort Company

1 Motorcycle Messenger Platoon (6 LMGs)

1 Infantry Gun Section (2 75mm leIG)

1 Self-Propelled Flak Section (4 20mm guns)

1 (motZ) Panzerjäger Platoon (3 75mm PAK 40)

1 Infantry Platoon (2 80mm mortars, 6 LMGs & 4 HMGs)

#### **SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment**

1 (mot) Regimental Staff

3 (mot) Battalions, each with

3 Panzer Grenadier Companies (4 HMGs, 18 LMGs, 2 80mm mortars & 2 flamethrowers)

1 Heavy Company

1 Mortar Platoon (6 80mm mortars)

1 Panzerjäger Platoon (3 75mm PAK 40)

1 Infantry Gun Section (4 75mm leIG)

- 1 Anti-Tank Rifle Platoon (3 heavy anti-tank rifles)
- 1 (motZ) Infantry Gun Section (4 150mm sIG)
- 1 Self Propelled Flak Company (12 20mm guns)
- 1 Motorcycle Company (3 75mm PAK 40, 4 HMGs, 18 LMGs & 2 80mm mortars)
- 1 (mot) Pioneer Company (18 LMGs & 6 flamethrowers)

### **SS Panzergrenadier Regiment**

- 1 (mot) Regimental Staff
- 1 (mot) Regimental Staff Company
- 1 Motorcycle Messenger Platoon
- 1 Panzerjäger Platoon (3 75mm PAK 40)
- 1 Signals Platoon
- 2 (mot) Battalions, each with
  - 3 Panzergrenadier Companies (4 HMGs, 18 LMGs, 2 80mm mortars & 2 flamethrowers)
  - 1 Heavy Company
  - 1 Mortar Platoon (6 80mm mortars)
  - 1 Panzerjäger Platoon (3 75mm PAK 40)
  - 1 Infantry Gun Section (4 75mm leIG)
  - 1 Anti-Tank Rifle Platoon (3 heavy anti-tank rifles)
- 1 (halftrack) Battalion
  - 3 Panzergrenadier Companies (4 HMGs, 34 LMGs, 2 80mm mortars & 2 flamethrowers)
  - 1 Heavy Company
  - 1 Infantry Gun Section (4 75mm leIG)
  - 1 Panzerjäger Platoon (3 75mm PAK 40)
  - 1 Anti-Tank Rifle Platoon (3 heavy anti-tank rifles)
- 1 (motZ) Infantry Gun Section (4 150mm sIG)
- 1 Self Propelled Flak Company (12 20mm guns)
- 1 Motorcycle Company (3 75mm PAK 40, 4 HMGs, 18 LMGs & 2 80mm mortars)
- 1 (mot) Pioneer Company (18 LMGs & 6 flamethrowers)

### **SS Panzer Battalion "Wiking"**

- 1 Panzer Staff (1 LMG)
- 1 Panzer Staff Company (2 LMGs)
- 3 Sturmgeschütz Companies (7 StuGs ea)

### **SS Reconnaissance Regiment "Wiking"**

- 1 (mot) Staff Company
- 1 Signals Platoon
- 1 Panzerjäger Platoon (3 75mm PAK 40 & 3 LMGs)
- 1 Motorcycle Platoon (6 LMGs)
- 1 Self Propelled Flak Platoon (4 20mm guns)
- 1 Armored Car Company (18 20mm & 24 LMGs)
- 1 (mot) Light Reconnaissance Supply Column

### **2 Reconnaissance Battalions, each with**

- 2 (mot) Reconnaissance Companies (2 80mm mortars, 4 HMGs, 18 LMGs & 3 heavy antitank rifles)
- 1 (mot) Support Company
- 1 Pioneer Platoon (4 LMGs)

1 Panzerjager Platoon (3 75mm PAK 40 & 3 LMGs)

1 Infantry Gun Platoon (4 75mm leIG)

**SS Flak Battalion “Wiking”**

1 (mot) Staff Company (1 LMG)

1 Self Propelled Medium Flak Company (9 37mm guns)

3 (motZ) Heavy Flak Batteries (4 88mm, 3 20mm & 2 LMGs) 1 (mot) Light Flak Supply Column

**5th SS Artillery Regiment**

1 Regimental Staff 1 Regimental Staff Battery

**1st Battalion** 1 Battalion Staff

1 Battalion Staff Battery (6 LMGs)

3 Self Propelled leFH Batteries (6 105mm leFH SdKfz 124 Wespe ea) **2nd & 3rd**

**Battalion**

Staff & Staff Battery (6 LMGs)

2 (motZ) Batteries (6 105mm leFH & 2 LMGs ea)

**4th Battalion**

Staff & Staff Battery (6 LMGs)

2 (motZ) Batteries (6 150mm sFH & 2 LMGs ea)

1 (motZ) Battery (6 105mm sK 18/40 guns & 2 LMGs ea)

**SS Panzerjager Battalion “Wiking”**

1 Self Propelled Panzerjager Company (9 75mm PAK 40 & 9 LMGs) 2 (motZ)

Panzerjager Companies (9 75mm PAK 40 & 9 LMGs) **SS Pioneer Battalion “Wiking”**

1 (mot) Reconnaissance Company (6 HMGs & 9 LMGs)

1 (halftrack) Pioneer Company (40 LMGs & 6 flamethrowers) 2 (mot) Pioneer Companies (18 LMGs & 6 flamethrowers)

1 (mot) Briiko B (4 LMGs)

1 (mot) Light Pioneer Supply Column (2 LMGs)

**SS Signals Battalion “Wiking”**

1 Panzer Radio Company (25 LMGs)

1 (mot) Telephone Company (6 LMGs)

1 (mot) Light Signals Supply Column (2 LMGs)

**SS Division Support (Einheiten) “Wiking”**

4 (mot) (120 ton) Transportation Companies (8 LMGs ea)

1 (mot) (60 ton) Heavy Supply Column (4 LMGs)

4 (mot) Heavy Fuel Columns (4 LMGs ea)

1 (mot) Supply Company (8 LMGs)

1 (mot) Maintenance Company (4 LMGs)

**SS Maintenance Battalion “Wiking”**

3 (mot) Maintenance Companies (4 LMGs ea)

1 (mot) Heavy Replacement Company (4 LMGs)

**SS Commissariat Battalion “Wiking”**

1 (mot) Field Bakery (4 LMGs)

1 (mot) Butcher Company (4 LMGs)

1 (mot) Divisional Administration (4 LMGs)

1 (mot) Field Post Office (2 LMGs)

1 (mot) Maintenance Company (2 LMGs)

## **SS Medical Battalion “Wiking”**

2 (mot) Medical Companies (4 LMGs)

1 (mot) Field Hospital (2 LMGs)

3 (mot) Ambulances (1 LMG ea)

Other

SS Military Police Company “Wiking” (6 LMGs)

On 10/22/43 the division was renamed the 5th SS Panzer Division “Wiking” and the panzer grenadier regiments were renamed as follows: 9th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment “Germania”

10th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment “Westland”

The remainder of the units were renumbered “5th.” The Narwa Panzergrenadier Battalion became the 3 10th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment, then it became the 20th Fusilier Battalion, was detached, and became part of the 20th Estonian Freiwilligen Division. The division suffered extremely heavy losses in the battle of the Korsun-Shevchnekovskii Pocket, which ended 2/17/44. In April 1944 the division’s panzer battalion and panzer inventory were as follows:

1/5th Panzer Regiment

1 Panzer Staff Company

4 Panzer Companies

PzKpfw MkV Panther 79

On 16 June 1944 the division was reorganized by Army Group Center. The 5th SS Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion and the 3/10th Panzergrenadier Regiment “Westland” were newly formed at this time.

In May 1944 OKH records show the division organized and equipped as follows:

### **Division**

Division Staff Divisional

Escort Company

Motorcycle Platoon (6 LMGs)

Self Propelled Flak Battery (4 20mm guns)

Self Propelled Anti-Tank Platoon (3 LMGs & 3 75mm PAK 40) Infantry Gun Platoon (2 75mm leIG)

Mixed Panzergrenadier Platoon (4 HMGs, 6 LMGs, & 2 80mm mortars) **5th SS Panzer Regiment**

Regimental Staff

1st Panzer Battalion

(1-4th Companies) (MkV Panthers)

1 Panzer Maintenance Platoon

2nd Panzer Battalion

(5-8th Companies) (Mk IV Panzers)

1 Panzer Maintenance Company

### **9th “Germania” SS Panzergrenadier Regiment**

Regimental Staff

1st Battalion

1-3rd Companies (4 HMGs, 18 LMGs, 2 80mm mortars & 2 flamethrowers)

4th Company

1 Mortar Platoon (2 LMGs & 4 120mm mortars)



1 Panzerjager Platoon (3 LMGs & 3 75mm PAK 40)  
2 Infantry Gun Sections (1 LMG & 2 75mm leIG ea)  
2nd Battalion (6-10th Companies) (same as 1st Battalion)  
3rd (halftrack) Battalion (11-15th Companies)  
1-3rd (halftrack) Companies (4 HMGs, 40 LMGs, 2 80mm mortars, 2 flamethrowers, 7 20mm guns & 2 75mm guns)  
4th Company  
1 Pioneer Platoon (13LMGs & 6 flamethrowers)  
1 Infantry Gun Section (1 LMG & 2 75mm leIG)  
1 Panzerjager Platoon (8 LMGs & 3 75mm PAK 40)  
1 Gun Platoon (8 LMGs & 6 75mm guns)  
16th (self-propelled flak) Company (12 20mm & 4 LMGs)  
17th (self-propelled infantry gun) Company (6 150mmsIG&8LMGs) 18th (mot) Pioneer Company (2 HMGs, 12 LMGs, 6 flamethrowers & 2 80mm mortars)

### **10th “Westland” SS Panzergrenadier Regiment**

same as 9th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment

### **5th SS Reconnaissance Battalion**

Battalion Staff Heavy Platoon (6 SdKfz 234/3 with 75mm KwK & 6 LMGs) 1 Armored Car Company (18 20mm & 24 LMGs)  
1 (halftrack) Armored Car Company (16 20mm & 25 LMGs) 2 (halftrack) Companies (49 LMGs, 2 80mm mortars & 3 75mm guns) 1 (halftrack) Company  
1 Pioneer Platoon (13 LMGs & 6 flamethrowers)  
1 Panzerjager Platoon (8 LMGs & 3 75mm PAK 40)  
1 Infantry Gun Section (2 75mm leIG & 4 LMGs)  
1 Gun Section (8 LMGs & 6 75mm guns)  
1 (mot) Reconnaissance Supply Column (3 LMGs)

### **5th SS Panzerjager Battalion**

Battalion Staff

3 Self Propelled Panzerjager Companies (14 75mm PAK 40 & 14 LMGs ea) **5th SS**

### **Panzer Artillery Regiment**

1 Regimental Staff & Staff Battery (2 LMGs)  
1 Self Propelled Flak Battery (4 quad 20mm guns & 2 LMGs) **1st (Self Propelled) Battalion**

Staff & (self-propelled)

Staff Battery (3 LMGs & 3 20mm guns)

2 Self Propelled leFH Batteries (6 105mm leFH SdKfz 124 Wespe) 1 Self Propelled sFH Battery (6 150mm sFH SdKfz 165 Hummel) **2nd Battalion**

Staff & Staff Battery (3 LMGs & 3 20mm guns)

2 (motZ) Batteries (6 105mm leFH & 2 LMGs ea)

### **3rd Battalion**

same as 2nd Battalion

### **4th Battalion**

Staff & Staff Battery (3 LMGs & 3 20mm guns)

2 (motZ) Batteries (6 150mm sFH & 2 LMGs ea)

1 (motZ) Battery (6 105mm sK 18/40 guns & 2 LMGs ea)

**5th SS Flak Battalion** Staff & Staff Battery

3 (motZ) heavy Flak Batteries (4 88mm, 3 20mm & 2 LMGs ea) 1 (motZ) Medium Flak Batteries (9 37mm & 4 LMGs ea)

1 (motZ) Searchlight Platoon (4 600mm searchlights)

### **5th SS Panzer Pioneer Battalion**

Staff (2 LMGs)

1 (halftrack) Pioneer Company (2 HMGs, 46 LMGs, 3 heavy anti-tank rifles, 2 80mm mortars & 6 flamethrowers)

2 (mot) Pioneer Companies (2 HMGs, 18 LMGs, 2 80mm mortars & 6 flamethrowers)

1 (mot) Heavy Panzer Bridging Train (5 LMGs)

1 (mot) Light Panzer Bridging Train (3 LMGs)

### **5th SS Panzer Signals Battalion**

1 Panzer Telephone Company (14 LMGs)

1 Panzer Radio Company (20 LMGs)

1 (mot) Signals Supply Column (1 LMG)

### **5th SS Feldersatz Battalion**

5 Companies

### **5th SS Supply Troop**

1-7th/5th SS (mot) 120 ton Transportation Companies (8 LMGs ea) 5/5th SS (mot) 20 ton Light Flak Supply Column

5th SS (mot) Workshop Company (4 LMGs)

5th SS (mot) Supply Company (8 LMGs)

### **5th SS Truck Park**

1/,2/,3/5th SS (mot) Maintenance Companies (4 LMGs)

5th SS (mot) 75 ton Heavy Maintenance Supply Column

### **Medical**

1/,2/5th SS (mot) Medical Companies (2 LMGs ea)

1/,2/,3/5th SS Ambulances

### **Administration**

5th SS (mot) Bakery Company (6 LMGs)

5th SS (mot) Butcher Company (6 LMGs)

5th SS (mot) Divisional Administration Platoon (2 LMGs)

5th SS (mot) Military Police Troop (5 platoons) (15 LMGs)

5th SS (mot) Field Post Office (2 LMGs)

The bulk of the division passed into American captivity near Rastadt in May 1945.

### **Commanders**

*Obergruppenführer* Felix Steiner 1940 - January 1943

*Obergruppenführer* Herbert Gille January 1943-August 1944 *Oberführer* Edmund Delsenhofer August 1944

*Standartenführer* Rudolf Müklenkamp August 1944-September 1944 *Oberführer* Karl Ulrich September 1944-May 1945

### **Obergruppenführer Feliz Steiner**

Felix Martin Julius Steiner was born on 23 May 1896 in Stallupönen, East Prussia. He served in both World War I and World War II and was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords. He significantly contributed, together with Paul

Hausser, to the development and transformation of the Waffen-SS, as an armed wing of the Nazi Party's Schutzstaffel, into a multi-ethnic and multinational military force of Nazi Germany.



In 1919, Steiner joined the Freikorps in the East Prussian city of Memel and was incorporated into the Reichswehr in 1921. In 1933, he left the Reichswehr having attained the rank of Major.

Steiner joined the Nazi Party (membership number: 4.264.295) and the Sturmabteilung where he began work developing new training techniques and tactics. In 1935, he joined the Schutzstaffel and took command of a Battalion of SS-Verfügungstruppen troops, and within a year had been promoted to SS-Standartenführer being in command of the SS-Deutschland Regiment.

At the outbreak of war Steiner was SS-Oberführer in charge of the WaffenSS regiment SS-*Deutschland*. He led this regiment well through Invasion of Poland and the Battle of France, for which he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 15 August 1940.

Steiner was chosen by Heinrich Himmler to oversee the creation of, and command an elite Panzer division, the 5th SS Panzer Division Wiking. In 1943, he was promoted to the command of the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps. On 28 January 1945, Steiner was placed in command of the 11th SS Panzer Army, which formed part of a new ad-hoc formation to

protect Berlin from the Soviet armies advancing from the Vistula River.

On 21 April, during the Battle for Berlin, Steiner was placed in command of Army Detachment Steiner, while Adolf Hitler ordered Steiner to envelop the 1st Belorussian Front through a pincer movement, advancing from the North of the city. However, as his worn out and exhausted unit was outnumbered by ten to one, Steiner made it clear that he did not have the capacity for a counter-attack. It resulted in Hitler falling into a tearful rage on 22 April during the daily situation conference in the Führerbunker. After the capitulation of Germany, Steiner was imprisoned and indicted as part of the Nuremberg Trials. However, he was cleared of all charges of war crimes and released in 1948. He continued to live in Germany, wrote several books, and participated in organising support for former WaffenSS members.

After the early war campaigns, Steiner was chosen by SS-Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler to oversee the creation of, and then command the new volunteer SS Division, SS-Division *Wiking*. The Wiking was made up of Non-German volunteers, and at the time of its creation consisted mostly of Dutch, Walloons, and Scandinavians including the Danish regiment Frikorps Danmark.

In the Wiking Division, Steiner created a capable formation from disparate elements, and he commanded them competently through the many battles in the east from 1941 until his promotion to command of the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps.

While there are several incidents documented by historians in which the division engaged in massacres, the Wiking's official combat record is clear of any specific War Crimes prosecutions. Steiner said of the Commissar Order "No rational unit commander could comply with such an Order". He felt that it was incompatible with soldierly conduct and would result in a breakdown in military discipline, and that it was incompatible with giving combat its moral worth. Even if it was on utilitarian grounds, Steiner felt that the Commissar Order was to be ignored, as detrimental to good order and discipline.

In April 1943, Steiner was placed in command of the newly formed III SS Panzer Corps. The unit participated in anti-partisan actions in Yugoslavia. In November/December 1943 his corps was transferred to the Eastern Front and positioned in the northern sector at Leningrad under Army Group North. Steiner's Panzer Corps played a leading role during the successful defensive battles at Narva. During the battle of the Tannenberg line his forces were able to withstand a superior Soviet force with only 7 tanks left. His unit then withdrew with the rest of Army Group North to the Courland Peninsula.

### **Army Group Vistula**

In January 1945, Steiner along with the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps was transferred by ship from the Courland Pocket to help with the defence of the German homeland.

The III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps was assigned to Army Group Vistula and put under the new Eleventh SS Panzer Army, although this army really only existed on paper. Once the Soviets reached the Oder river, Eleventh SS Panzer Army became inactive and the III SS Panzer Corps was re-assigned to the German Third Panzer Army as a reserve during the Soviets' Berlin Offensive Operation. During the Battle of Halbe, the first major battle of the offensive, General Gotthard Heinrici, the commander of Army Group Vistula, transferred most of the III SS Panzer Corps' divisions to General Theodor Busse's German Ninth Army.

Steiner had always been one of Hitler's favourite commanders, who admired his 'get the job done' attitude and the fact that he owed his allegiance to the Waffen SS, not the



Prussian Officer Corps. Joseph Goebbels also praised Steiner. "He is energetic and purposeful and is attacking his job with great verve," Goebbels wrote on 1 March 1945. By 21 April, Soviet Marshal Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front had broken through the German lines on the Seelow Heights. Hitler, ignoring the facts, started to call the ragtag units that came under Steiner's command Army Detachment Steiner (*Armeeabteilung Steiner*). An army detachment was something more than a corps but less than an army. Hitler ordered Steiner to attack the northern flank of the huge salient created by the 1st Belorussian Front's breakout. Steiner's attack was due to coincide with General Busse's Ninth Army, attacking from the south in a pincer attack. The Ninth Army had been pushed to south of the 1st Belorussian Front's salient. To facilitate this attack, Steiner was assigned the three divisions of the Ninth Army's CI Army Corps: the 4th SS Panzergrenadier Division *Polizei*, the 5th Jäger Division, and the 25th Panzergrenadier Division. All three divisions were north of the Finow Canal on the Northern flank of Zhukov's salient. Weidling's LVI Panzer Corps, which was still east of Berlin with its northern flank just below Werneuchen, was also to participate in the attack. The three divisions from CI Army Corps were to attack south from Eberswalde on the Finow Canal towards the LVI Panzer Corps. The three divisions from CI Army Corps were 24 kilometres (about 15 miles) east of Berlin and the attack to the south would cut the 1st Belorussian Front's salient in two.

Steiner called Heinrici and informed him that the plan could not be implemented because the 5th Jäger Division and the 25th Panzergrenadier Division were deployed defensively and could not be redeployed until the 2nd Naval Division arrived from the coast to relieve them. This left only two battalions of the 4th SS Panzergrenadier Division available and they had no combat weapons.

Based on Steiner's assessment, Heinrici called Hans Krebs, Chief of Staff of the German General Staff of the Army High Command (*Oberkommando des Heeres* or OKH), and told him that the plan could not be implemented. Heinrici asked to speak to Hitler, but was told Hitler was too busy to take his call.

On 22 April 1945, at his afternoon conference, Hitler became aware that Steiner was not going to attack and he fell into a tearful rage. Hitler declared that the war was lost, he blamed the generals, and announced that he would stay on in Berlin until the end and then kill himself. On the same day, General Rudolf Holste was given what few mobile forces Steiner commanded so that he could participate in a new plan to relieve Berlin. Holste was to attack from the north while General Walther Wenck attacked from the west and General Theodor Busse attacked from the south. These attacks amounted to little and, on 25 April, the Soviet forces attacking to the north and to the south of Berlin linked up to the west of the city.

### **End of the war - peacetime**

After the surrender, Steiner was incarcerated until 1948. He faced charges at the Nuremberg Trials, but they were all dropped and he was released. He dedicated the last decades of his life to writing his memoirs and several books about the war. He died on 12 May 1966.

### **Promotions**

1 June 1936 *tenführer*

Started World War II as *SS-Oberführer*

9 November 1940 promoted *SS-Brigadeführer* and Generalmajor of the Waffen-SS  
1 January 1942 promoted *SS-Gruppenführer* and Generalleutnant of the Waffen-SS  
1 July 1943 promoted *SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS* Mentioned in the Wehrmachtbericht  
Entrance into the SS-Verfügungstruppe as *SS-Standar*

### **Awards**

Iron Cross of 1914, 1st and 2nd class

Wound Badge (1918) in Black

Clasp to the Iron Cross, 1st and 2nd class

Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords Knight's Cross on 15 August 1940

Oak Leaves on 23 December 1942 (159th award)

Swords on 10 August 1944 (86th award)

German Cross in Gold (22 April 1942)

Eastern Front Medal

Order of the Cross of Liberty, 1st class with Breast Star, Oak Leaves and Swords (Finland)

SS Honour Ring

Sword of honour of the Reichsführer-SS

Mention in the Wehrmachtbericht (1 August 1944)

### **Commands**

Commander of the SS-Regiment "Deutschland" 1 June 1936 to 1 December 1940

1 December 1940 to 1 January 1943 Commander of SS-Germania Division (mot),

On 31 December 1940 SS-Germania Division renamed SS-Wiking Division On 9

November 1942 SS-Wiking redesignated 5.SS-Wiking Panzergrenadier Division (I),

10 May 1943 to November 9, 1944 Commander of the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps

26 November 1944 to March 5, 1945 Commander of the XI SS Panzer Army

Command of the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps a corps in the Third Panzer Army

On 21 April 1945 what remained of Steiner's command redesignated Army Detachment Steiner

### **Herbert Otto Gille**

**Herbert Otto Gille** (March 8, 1897 in Gandersheim – December 26,

1966) A winner of the Knight's Cross with Oakleaves, Swords and Diamonds and of the German Cross in Gold, the most highly decorated member of the Waffen SS during World War II. By the end of the war he held the rank of SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS.

### **Military career**

Born in Gandersheim, Gille began his military career as a first lieutenant in the artillery branch during the First World War and won the Iron Cross First and Second Classes. He left the army in 1919 and remained a civilian working in agriculture and as a car dealer until 1931 when he joined the Nazi Party and the SS. He married Sophie Charlotte Mennecke on 4 January 1935 and his only child, a daughter, was born on 9 October 1935.



In 1934 he was re-activated by the SS combat support forces. He became a Company Commander in Ellwangen, then a Battalion Commander of the SS regiment Germania in Arolsen. He later served as the commander of an artillery unit in Jueterbog. As the commander of the 1st Battalion of the SS-V Artillery Regiment Gille participated in the invasion of Poland and in the western campaign. In 1940 he took over the artillery regiment of the 5th SS Panzer Division, led by SS Obergruppenführer Felix Steiner.<sup>10</sup>



After the assault on the Soviet Union, Gille, as a leader of an advance guard, reached the Kuban and received the Knight's Cross on 8 October 1942. Shortly thereafter he took command of the *Wiking* Division (5th SS Panzer Division) on the Eastern Front. Early in 1944, Gille was instrumental in the withdrawal of his command and others of the encircled Group Stemmermann through "Hells Gate" during the Korsun cauldron encirclement, also known as the Cherkassy Pocket. The Soviets greatly outnumbered the German forces but they failed to cut off their retreat, though they were able to inflict serious damage on the German formations. Gille received the diamonds in addition to his Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords on 19 April 1944. Shortly after his escape from the Cherkassy Pocket, Gille and members of his staff were flown into the encircled town of Kovel to organize its defense. Under Gille's steady leadership the mixed army and Waffen SS units maintained a vigorous defense until the siege was raised by approaching German units from the West.

His troops stood strong on the East Prussia border with the 3rd SS Panzer Division and prevented the planned Soviet breakthrough to Berlin in the autumn of 1944 destroying large numbers of Soviet tanks. In January 1945 Gille, as leader of the IV SS Panzer Corps comprising the 3rd and 5th SS Panzer Divisions, was sent to Hungary to attempt to relieve the encircled city of Budapest. However, his troops were unable to break through to the city. In March 1945 he led the IV SS Panzer Corps in the failed Lake Balaton Offensive and following the Soviet counter-offensive his corps was forced to retreat into Austria. When the end of war was clear, he marched towards the U.S. troops in order to avoid surrendering to Soviet forces. He was held by the U.S. for three years, and released in May 1948.



Despite being an early Nazi Party member, Gille was known for his apolitical views. The author Heinz Höhne in *The Order under the Death Head* characterized Gille as an enigma and “Nur-Soldat” (soldier – nothing else) who once threatened a newly assigned *Weltanschauungsoffizier* (political indoctrination officer) with a clean-out squad to gather his uniforms and other possessions and throw them and the officer out of the unit. Gille was highly regarded for his leadership qualities and tactical abilities. He commanded Waffen-SS units at the regiment, division and corps level with distinction during the war. Gille was popular with his men and admired for his personal bravery. He was well known for the unusual walking-stick he carried.

### **Post-War**

After the war he worked for a newspaper until 1958. He also owned a small bookshop. Gille was the founder of a magazine for veterans of the Wiking division, “Wiking Ruf”. On 26 December 1966 Herbert Otto Gille died of a heart attack in Stemmen, near Hannover. He was also buried at the local cemetery in Stemmen. However, his grave no longer exists.

### **Personal life**

On January 3, 1935, Gille married 31-year-old Sophie Charlotte Mennecke and they had together one daughter (born on October 9, 1935).

### **Summary of his career**

#### **Dates of rank**

Leutnant: January 27, 1915

Oberleutnant: March 31, 1919

SS-Anwärter: December, 1931

SS-Scharführer: 1932

SS-Untersturmführer: April 20, 1933 SS-Obersturmführer: April 20, 1935 SS-

Hauptsturmführer: November 9, 1935 SS-Sturmbannführer: April 20, 1937 SS-

Obersturmbannführer: October 19, 1939

SS-Standartenführer: January 30, 1941

SS-Oberführer: October 1, 1941

SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS: November 9, 1942 SS-Gruppenführer

und Generaleutnant der Waffen-SS: November 9, 1943 SS-Obergruppenführer und

General der Waffen-SS: November 9, 1944

### **Notable decorations**

Iron Cross (1914) 2nd and 1st Class

SS-Honour Ring

Clasp to the Iron Cross (1939)

2nd Class (26 October 1939)

1st Class (21 November 1939)

German Cross in Gold on 28 February 1942 as SS*Oberführer* in SS-Artillerie-Regiment 5

Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds Knight's Cross

on 8 October 1942 as SS*Oberführer* and commander of SS Artillerie-Regiment 5 “Wiking”

315th Oak Leaves on 1 November 1943 as SS*Brigadeführer* and *Generalmajor* of the

Waffen-SS, and commander of SS-Panzergrenadier-Division “Wiking”

47th Swords on 20 February 1944 as *SSGruppenführer* and *Generalleutnant* of the Waffen-SS, and commander of SS-Panzer Grenadier-Division "Wiking"  
12th Diamonds on 19 April 1944 as *SSGruppenführer* and *Generalleutnant* of the Waffen-SS, and commander of 5th SS-Panzer-Division "Wiking" General Assault Badge (1941)  
Anschluss Medal  
Sudetenland Medal  
Eastern Front Medal (1941)  
The Honour Cross of the World War 1914/1918 (1934)  
Duchy of Brunswick's War Merit Cross Second and First Classes  
Finish Order of the Cross of Liberty 1st Class with Swords  
Mentioned twice by name in the Wehrmachtbericht (6 April 1944 and 2 September 1944)

### **Oberführer Edaurd Deisenhofer**

Dr. **Eduard Deisenhofer** (27 June 1909, Freising, Upper Bavaria – MIA

31 January 1945) was an officer and commander in the German Waffen-SS who served with several combat divisions on both the eastern and western fronts, earning several high grade distinctions, such as the Close Combat Clasp, and the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. Deisenhofer can be seen as an interesting example of the 'educated' SS man, most of whom served in the SD. <sup>11</sup>



Born in Freising, Bavaria, to a middle-class family, Deisenhofer excelled in his studies at school from a young age. After his schooling, he pursued studies in the fields of politics and economics. He eventually received his PhD as a political economist. During his time at university, he had come into contact with the Nazi Party, and soon applied to join the SA. After only a few months with the SA, Deisenhofer transferred to the SS, beginning his service on 1 October 1930.

Described by Gottfried Klingemann as a 'clear-thinking and just man with an energetic and tenacious character', Deisenhofer quickly climbed his way through the ranks, holding various low level command positions, including service with the Leibstandarte SS *Adolf Hitler* in 1934 and at the KZ Dachau in 1935. By this stage he had reached the rank of SS-Hauptsturmführer.

On 30 January 1936, Deisenhofer married Edeltraut Holzapfel. Over the course of the next few years, they would have three daughters, one of whom was killed in a bombing raid in

May 1943.

In 1936, he was transferred to SS-Wachtruppe *Oberbayern*. Over the next two years he served in both the Totenkopfverbände units SS Verbände *Sachsen* and SS Standarte *Thuringen*.

### **Early war campaigns**

The outbreak of war found him serving back with the *Oberbayern*, now expanded to an SS Totenkopf Standarte. The *Oberbayern* was involved in *police and security* measures during the Invasion of Poland.

After the Polish campaign, *Oberbayern* was absorbed into the newly formed SS Division *Totenkopf*. Deisenhofer, now an SS-Sturmbannführer (Major), was placed in command of the II Battalion of *SS-Totenkopf-Infanterie-Regiment 1*. He led this formation through the initial phase of the Campaign in the West, receiving the Iron Cross First Class for his bravery in combat. Deisenhofer was pulled out of the line in late May and placed in charge of II Battalion of the newly formed Dutch and Belgian volunteer formation SS-Freiwilligen-Standarte *Nordwest*. After commanding the II./*Nordwest* during its training and formation, Deisenhofer was transferred to the SS-Ersatz-Bataillon *Ost*, a replacement and training unit based in Berlin.

In August 1941, Deisenhofer was transferred to the command of the I./SS-Infanterie-Regiment 9 *Germania*, one of the Infantry regiments of the SS Division (mot) *Wiking*, currently serving on the Eastern Front. Deisenhofer commanded the Battalion during the winter, before being sent back to the *Totenkopf* division in February 1942, this time to serve as commander of I./SS-Totenkopf-Infanterie-Regiment 1.

The Totenkopf was attached to Army Group North, advancing on Leningrad. The division saw very heavy fighting near Demjansk and during the battle was completely surrounded (Demyansk Pocket). Deisenhofer led his men well, acting bravely and showing courage under fire. When his badly depleted Battalion was formed into part of a larger Kampfgruppe, Deisenhofer was given command, leading the Kampfgruppe during the breakout from the pocket, and engaging in more than 35 days of hand-to-hand combat, qualifying him for the Close Combat Clasp in silver. On 20 April 1942, he was promoted to SS-Obersturmbannführer (Lieutenant Colonel). On 17 May 1942, Deisenhofer was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross for his actions in the Demyansk Pocket. The tattered remnants of the *Totenkopf* were pulled back to France to be rebuilt. Deisenhofer was ordered to Berlin for reassignment.

### **Training duties**

Deisenhofer was firstly reassigned as commander of an SS motorcycle replacement battalion which he led until he was ordered to SS-Junkerschule in Bad Tölz, Bavaria. Upon arrival at the SS officers school, Deisenhofer was informed that he was to take over as training group commander. As part of this command, he was to travel between several different training grounds including the Armour school, Panzertruppenschule Wünsdorf and the Light Infantry school, both located at Wünsdorf.

At the end of April 1943, Deisenhofer was transferred to Berlin to operate as a training officer for the SS Infantry and Mountain troop Inspection department, a part of the SS-FHA. In November 1943 he was sent to the 11th (Officer Training) Department (Amt XI) of the SS-FHA.

### **Divisional command - late war**

In early March 1944, Diesenhofer was finally relieved from his duties at  
tached to the SS-Junkerschule Tölz and sent back to a combat formation, this time SS-  
Panzergrenadier-Regiment 21 of the 10.SS-Panzer-Division *Frundsberg*. Diesenhofer  
commanded the regiment during the *Frundsberg* and the 9.SS-Panzer-Division  
*Hohenstaufen*'s successful attempt to relieve the encircled 1.Panzerarmee of Generaloberst  
Hans-Valentin Hube in what was known as the Kamenets-Podolsky Pocket. For his actions  
during this battle, Diesenhofer was promoted to SS-Standartenführer (Colonel).  
The *Frundsberg* was sent to the Normandy Front to attempt to halt the advance of Field  
Marshal Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group, currently advancing on Caen.  
Deisenhofer led the regiment through heavy fighting including the battles on Hill 112 and  
the defeat of Operation Epsom. In mid July, Diesenhofer was ordered back east to take  
command of the 5. SS-Panzer-Division *Wiking*, currently engaged in heavy fighting in the  
area near Modlin. In mid August, Diesenhofer was ordered back to Berlin to await his next  
command. At the end of the month, he took over command of the 17.SS-Panzergrenadier-  
Division *Götz von Berlichingen*, which was engaged in a fighting withdrawal towards the  
Saar. Diesenhofer commanded the division during the heavy fighting against the  
Americans on the Moselle and in the subsequent withdrawal to Metz. At the end of  
September, Diesenhofer was wounded in the fighting and ordered back to Berlin to rest  
and recuperate.  
On 31 December, he was tasked with organising a Kampfgruppe from the recruits of the  
SS-Truppenübungsplatz to defend Bad Saarow. On 1 January, Diesenhofer was promoted  
to SS-Oberführer (Senior Colonel). Near the end of January, Diesenhofer was ordered to  
Arnswalde in Pomerania to take command of the 15.Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS  
(lettische Nr.1). He began travelling north to take over his next command, but a Soviet  
ground attack aircraft attacked the staff car, killing Diesenhofer, his driver and his  
adjutant. Because evidence of Diesenhofer's death is lacking, he is classified as missing in  
action, rather than killed. His remains were not found.

### **Dates of rank**

SS-Scharführer: July 8, 1932

SS-Truppführer: May 17, 1933

SS-Obertruppführer: August 21, 1933 SS-Sturmführer: November 8, 1933 SS-  
Obersturmführer: April 20, 1934 SS-Hauptsturmführer: September 15, 1935 SS-  
Sturmbannführer: October 2, 1938 SS-Obersturmbannführer: April 20, 1942 SS-  
Standartenführer: April 20, 1944 SS-Oberführer: January 1, 1945

### **Notable decorations**

German Cross in Gold (1942)

Eastern Front Medal (1942)

Infantry Assault Badge(?)

Iron Cross Second (1940) and First (1940) Classes Wound Badge in Black (1940) and  
Silver (?) Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross (1942)

SS-Honour Ring (?)

Sudetenland Medal (1938)

Anschluss Medal (1938)

Close Combat Clasp (silver) (1942)

## ***Obergruppenführer Herbet Otto Gille***

Dates: \* 8. März 1897, Gandersheim + 26. Dezember 1966, Stemmen



Herbert Gille entered into the 1910 Royal Prussian Cadet Corps. When the war started, he moved as a lieutenant with the Field Artillery Regiment 55 into the field, later, a transfer to the Field Artillery Regiment 30. After mehereren wounds he retired in 1919 as a lieutenant in the army. After years as an estate manager 15 he enlisted in 1934 to SS-Verfügungstruppe, where he rose to Sturmbannführer to 1937. In 1938 he graduated from the battalion commander training course at the Infantry School Döberitz and was subsequently commander of the II. Battalion of the SS Regiment “Der Führer”. In the Polish and French campaigns he was commander of the First Division of the SS Artillery Regiment 5. On 30 January 1941 he was promoted to Standartenführer. At the beginning of the invasion of the Soviet Union Gillespie became commander of the Vorausabteilung the SS Division “Wiking”.

On October 1, 1941, he was promoted for his contributions to the chief officer of the Waffen-SS. After crossing the Kuban he was awarded for leading the advance party on October 8, 1941, the Knight's Cross and shortly afterwards he was appointed corps artillery Guide. On 1 May 1943, promoted to Brigadier General on December 1, 1942 Gillespie took the SS Division “Wiking”. For the success of his struggle Division in the Battle of Kharkov Gille was awarded the Oak Leaves on November 1, 1943 November 9, 1943, he was promoted to group leader. During the Battle of the Cherkassy cauldron from 29 January 1944, Gille and the SS-Panzer-Division “Wiking” proved time and again as a backbone of boiler defense. At the outbreak of the German troops from the boiler, the boiler commander, General Stemmermann fell, and Gillespie took over command of the erupting troops. For this performance, his swords were presented on 20 February 1944. The SS-Panzer-Division “Wiking” was moved to Hinterlland to be refreshed. Gille, however, Hitler ordered by Kovel. The city was surrounded by Russian forces and Gille



should now organize the defense of the encircled troops. After Gille could keep the city Kovel for 22 days, succeeded relief column, including the rejuvenated SS Panzer Division “Wiking” for 48 hours, liberate a corridor in the city and Gille was removing all troops from the fort. For this, Gille were awarded the diamonds on April 19, 1944. In August 1944, Gillespie was appointed Commanding General of the IV. SS Panzer Corps and appointed on November 9, 1944 Obergruppenführer. When the war ended Gille fell into American captivity from which he was released in 1948. Because membership in the SS Gille was sentenced to 18 months in prison, but she had already served by the prisoner.

### **Dates of rank**

Leutnant: January 27, 1915

Oberleutnant: March 31, 1919

SS-Anwärter: December, 1931

SS-Scharführer: 1932

SS-Untersturmführer: April 20, 1933 SS-Obersturmführer: April 20, 1935 SS-

Hauptsturmführer: November 9, 1935 SS-Sturmbannführer: April 20, 1937

SS-Obersturmbannführer: October 19, 1939

SS-Standartenführer: January 30, 1941

SS-Oberführer: October 1, 1941

SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS: November 9, 1942 SS-Gruppenführer

und Generaleutnant der Waffen-SS: November 9, 1943 SS-Obergruppenführer und

General der Waffen-SS: November 9, 1944

### **Decorations**

Iron Cross (1914) 2nd and 1st Class

War Merit Cross Second and First Classes (Brunswick)

The Honour Cross of the World War 1914/1918 (1934)

SS-Honour Ring

Clasp to the Iron Cross (1939)

2nd Class (26 October 1939)

1st Class (21 November 1939)

German Cross in Gold on 28 February 1942 as *SSOberführer* in SS-Artillerie-Regiment 5

Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds Knight's Cross on 8 October 1942 as *SSOberführer* and commander of SS Artillerie-Regiment 5 “Wiking”

315th Oak Leaves on 1 November 1943 as *SSBrigadeführer* and *Generalmajor* of the Waffen-SS, and commander of SS-Panzergrenadier-Division “Wiking”

47th Swords on 20 February 1944 as *SSGruppenführer* and *Generalleutnant* of the Waffen-SS, and commander of SS-Panzergrenadier-Division “Wiking”

12th Diamonds on 19 April 1944 as *SSGruppenführer* and *Generalleutnant* of the Waffen-SS, and commander of 5th SS-Panzer-Division “Wiking” General Assault Badge (May 1941)

Anschluss Medal

Sudetenland Medal with Prague Castle clasp

Eastern Front Medal (15 September 1941)

Finnish Order of the Cross of Liberty 1st Class with Swords

Mentioned twice in the Wehrmachtbericht (6 April 1944 and 2 September 1944)

SS Long Service Award

Sword of honour of the Reichsführer-SS  
Wound Badge (1939) in Silver

### **Standartenführer Johannes-Rudolf Mühlenkamp**

Mühlenkamp was born on 9 October 1910 in Montigny-lès-Metz, AlsaceLorraine. He was one of the early members of the NSDAP and the SS, joining on April 1933. Mühlenkamp was given the party number 2 800 042 and the SS service number 86 065. He was first assigned to the 4th SS

Standarte *Schleswig Holstein* in Hamburg before being moved to the 2nd SS Standarte of the SS-Verfügungstruppe in 1934. Then, Mühlenkamp had been selected to become an officer in 1935. He was sent to the SS junker school at Braunschweig.

From April to May 1936, Mühlenkamp completed motorcycle training with the Heers 2nd Panzer Division, being highly successful in pre World War II motorcycle competitions. On completion of his officer training, Mühlenkamp was assigned to the 2nd Battalion of the *Germania* Regiment (5th SS Panzer Division Wiking) as a platoon leader on November 1937. Mühlenkamp took over command of the Motor Cycle Company on May 1938.



### **World War II**

At the eve of the war, Mühlenkamp was the Divisional Adjutant of the SS

Verfügungstruppe Division, until December 1940, when he was given the command of the Reich Division Reconnaissance Battalion. Mühlenkamp was seriously wounded in the head by artillery shrapnel near Jelnja, Russia. Hospitalized between October and February 1942, Mühlenkamp missed the first Russian winter of the war. On his release from hospital, Johannes Mühlenkamp was assigned to the 5th SS Panzer Grenadier Division Wiking, as Panzer Battalion commander, until March 1943. When the number of soldiers from the battalion have been increased, the battalion was converted into a regiment. On August 1944, Mühlenkamp was given the command of the 5th SS Panzer Division Wiking. He commanded this unit until October 1944. Then, Mühlenkamp was promoted Inspector of Waffen SS Panzer troops in the SS-Führungshauptamt. His last command was the 32. SS-Panzer Grenadier-Division from January 1945 to February 1945.

### **Promotions**

SS-Standartenführer : 20 Apr. 1944

SS-Obersturmbannführer : 30 Jan. 1943 SS-Sturmbannführer : 30 Jan. 1942

SS-Hauptsturmführer : 30 Jun. 1939 SS-Obersturmführer : 9 Nov. 1937 SS-

Untersturmführer : 20 Apr. 1936

### **Decorations and Awards**

Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes : 3 Sep. 1942, as SS-Sturmbannführer and Kommandeur, SS-Panzer-Abteilung / SS-Division "Wiking" / LVII.Armeekorps / 1.Panzer-Armee/Heeresgruppe A

Mit Eichenlaub (Nr. 596) : 21 Sep. 1944, as SS-Standartenführer and Kommandeur, 5.SS-Panzer-Division "Wiking" / IV.SS-Pz.Korps / Heeresgruppe Mitte

Deutsches Kreuz in Gold : 2. Jan. 1942

Eisernes Kreuz 1939, 1st class : 11. Nov. 1939

Eisernes Kreuz 1939, 2nd class : 3. Oct. 1939

Mentioned in official Wehrmachtbericht : 11 Jul. 1944 (for his units destruction of 103 Soviet tanks at Maciejow)

Verwundetenabzeichen, 1939 in Gold: 13. Jan. 1943

Panzerkampfabzeichen

SS-Dienstauszeichnungen

Ehrendegen des RF SS

Totenkopfring der SS

Order of the Crown of King Zvonimir

### **Oberführer Karl Ulrich**

(1 December 1910–8 May 1996) was an Oberführer (Senior Colonel) in the Waffen-SS, who was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves during World War II.

Ullrich was born in Sarreguemines in 1910, joined *Infanterie-Regiment 19* after having graduated from university. He went from there to the *SSVerfügungstruppe* (later the *Waffen-SS*). Ullrich was an engineering graduate when he joined the SS Engineer Battalion of the SS-VT 1934.



He was commissioned as an officer within a year and posted to command the 3rd Company, SS Pionier Battalion, SS-Verfügungstruppe.

### **World War II**

He was awarded the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd class for bravery during the Battle of France, then transferred to the *Totenkopf* on the Eastern Front in 1941. He was awarded the Knight's Cross for his leadership and bravery during the battles of the Demyansk pocket in February 1942 and in October 1944 was given command of the 6th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment *Theodor Eicke* and was awarded the Oakleaves while in command. Promoted to Standartenführer (Colonel) he was given command of the 5th SS Panzer Division Wiking for the final battles of the war in Hungary. A short time before the end of the war he was promoted to Oberführer and he surrendered to the Russians in May 1945.

### **Awards**

Iron Cross (1939)

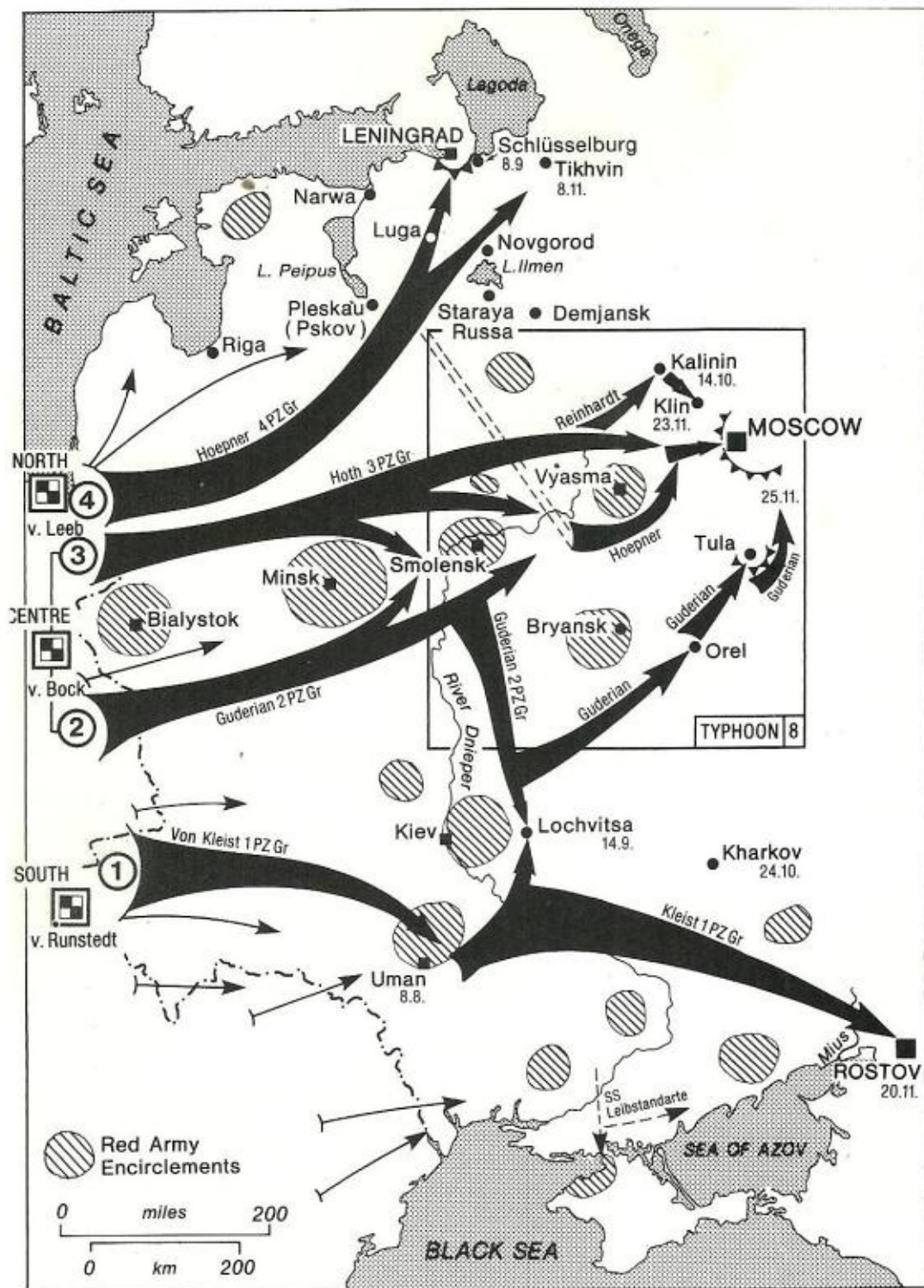
2nd Class (18 May 1940)

1st Class (1 July 1940)

Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves

### **Annexes**

**Operation Barbarossa June 1941**



In Operation 'Barbarossa', Army Groups North, Centre and South with powerful Luftwaffe support strike in three directions: Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev-Rostov. Encirclements of the Red Army are a triumphant feature of the early days, but military operations fanning out over a vast and often trackless interior are soon brought to a standstill. Halted by difficult terrain, bad weather, inadequate supplies and exhausted by an unyielding defence, the panzer divisions after capturing Kiev are driven to unrewarding battles for Leningrad and Moscow.

Hoepner (Fourth Pz-Army) 22 June leads Army Group North (von Leeb) to Leningrad. Guderian and Hoth (Second and Third Pz-Armies) 22 June responsible for the main German effort, lead Army Group Centre (von Bock) in the Moscow direction. Von Kleist (First Pz Army) 22 June leads Army Group South (von Runstedt) to Kiev and Rostov.



The outstanding panzer success of the early weeks is an envelopment of five Russian armies east of Kiev resulting in 600,000 prisoners for which von Kleist and Guderian are responsible. In the course of a subsequent operation, 'Typhoon' 2 October 1941, convergent action by Guderian, Reinhardt and Hoepner encircling Bryansk and Vyasma proves equally rewarding.

Seventeen panzer divisions, thirteen and a half motorized divisions lead 'Barbarossa' - but despite optimistic predictions of a three-week campaign, operations are destined to last four years. Expanded and re-equipped, in later campaigns the panzer force will nevertheless fail to match Russian numbers or strategy. Divisions are switched between theatres, fronts, and controlling corps. Four years later on the Central Front in January 1945, when the Red Army pushes across the Vistula, only four panzer divisions supporting indifferently equipped infantry divisions face 163 Russian divisions. At the conclusion of hostilities the panzer force is totally burned out and only weak battle groups remain at the Army's disposal.

**Hoepner** (4) PzGr 4: XXXXI PzK Reinhardt, LVI von Manstein: three PzDivs 1st, 6th, 8th: three MotDivs 3rd, 36th and SS Totenkopf (later trapped with SS 'Polizei', 'Danemark' and others at Demjansk). **Hoth** (3) PzGrS: XXXIX PzK Schmidt, LVII PzK Kuntzen: four PzDivs 7th, 12th, 19th, 20th: three MotDivs 14th, 18th, 20th: No SS formations **Guderian** (2) PzGr 2: XXIV PzK Geyr, XXXXVI PzK Vietinghoff XXXXVII PzK Lemelsen, five PzDivs 3rd, 4th, 10th, 17th, 18th: 3 1/2 Mot Divs 10th, 29th, SS Das Reich (later switched to Hoepner for attack on Moscow) and Regiment 'Gross Deutschland'

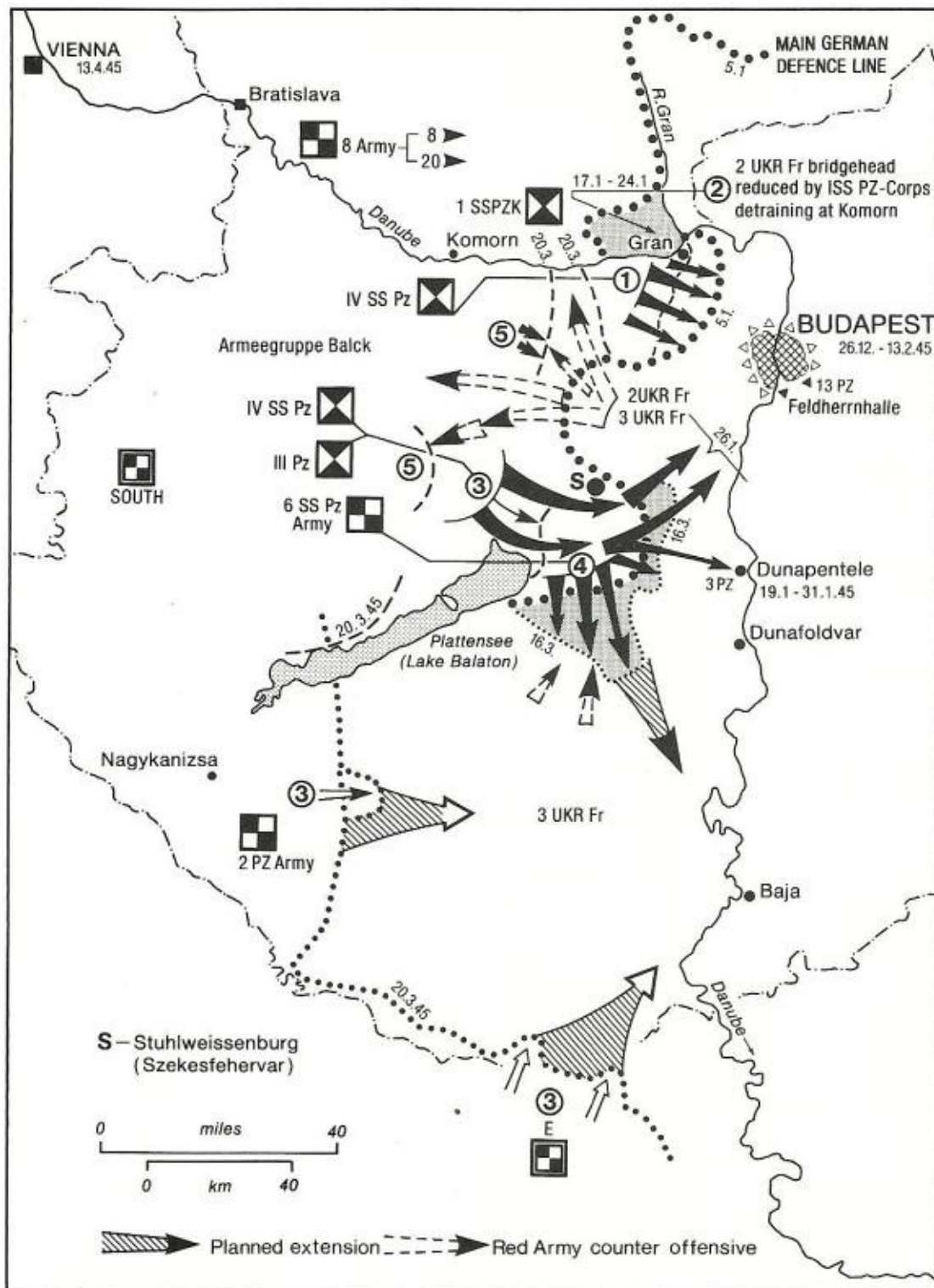
**Von Kleist** (1) PzGr 1: III PzK von Mackensen; XIV PzK von Wietersheim; XXXXVIII PzK Kempf; five PzDivs 9th, 11th, 13th, 14th, 16th; four MotDivs 16th, 25th, SS 'Wiking', SS (Brigade) 'Leibstandarte' AH, Regt Gen Goering. OKH Reserve 2nd, 5th PzDivs: 60th MotDiv

**German Army** von Brauchitsch 153 divisions (seventeen Pz, + two reserve, 134 mot divs) 3,417 tanks

**Luftwaffe** Keller, 1st Air Fleet; I Air Corps/A Gr North; Kesselring 2 Air Fleet, II, VIII Air Corps/A Gr Centre; Lohr 4th Air Fleet, IV, V Air Corps/A Gr South; - 3,800 aircraft

**Red Army/Air Force** 150-180 divs, 20,000 tanks, but only 1,000 T34s and 500 KV's, 10,000 aircraft (2,750 modern types).

**Last cauldron: Army and SS in Hungary, 1945**



Following an unsuccessful conclusion to 'Autumn Mist' (map 17) Sixth SS Panzer Army (Dietrich) is switched across Europe to reinforce Army Group South (Woetter) defending western Hungary. There on 26 December 1944 Budapest, the capital city of 800,000 inhabitants housing numerous military agencies and defended by upwards of 70,000 men including 13th Pz Division and Feldherrnhalle responsible to SS General Pfeffervon Wildenbruck (IX SS Mtn Corps), is encircled by two Ukrainian fronts. **Balck, Gille (1)** (Sixth SS Pz-Army) 13 February 1945. Operation 'Konrad' is the first of three attempts by Armeegruppe Balck (Sixth Army) to relieve Budapest. Starting on 1 January with IV SS Panzer Corps (Gille) transferred with Totenkopf and Wiking from Ninth Army/ Army Group Centre, 'Konrad' is a failure; despite heavy fighting by SS Wiking to within fifteen miles of the perimeter. Budapest

remains besieged. 'Konrad 2' a second attempt by III PzK (Breith) 9-12 January fares no better. **Priess (2)** Panzer battles next develop east of Komorn where an unexpectedly powerful Operation 'South Wind' lead by I SS Pz Corps - LSSAH and 12 SS HJ - reduces 2nd UKR Front's bridgehead on the River Gran. Pz Corps Feldherrnhalle with remnants of units isolated in Budapest provides mainly infantry support.

**Balck, Gille, Breith (3)** Meanwhile Sixth Army's third relief attempt 'Konrad 3' follows on 18 January 1945, from a new direction. But the reinforced SS Panzer Corps (Gille) attacking south around Stuhlweissenburg with 1st and 3rd Panzer Divisions, SS Totenkopf and SS Wiking while flank protection to the north is provided by Breith's III Panzer Corps - 6th and 23rd Panzer Divisions and south by Pz Recce Bns 1st, 3rd, 23rd again fails to relieve the city. A breakout attempt by the defenders on 11 February is equally unsuccessful; Budapest surrenders on 13 February 1945. Hitler's arbitrary diversion of panzer divisions to this secondary front is nevertheless set to continue. **Dietrich, Balck, de Angelis (4)**

Sixth SS Pz-Army 6 March 1945 opens a new offensive 'Spring Awakening' in which Sixth Army (Balck), Second Panzer Army (de Angelis) - four infantry divisions and a weak 16th Reichsfuhrer SS Panzer Grenadier Division (Baum) - are also involved in Hitler's plan to encircle the Red Army west of the Danube, recapture Budapest and retain oil-production centres at Nagykanizsa south-west of Lake Balaton. But 'Spring Awakening' falters in waterlogged terrain and when counter-attacked in strength by 3rd UKr Front fails to recover momentum. **(5)** A renewal of Russian attacks aiming at Vienna and the Danube valley threatening German communications precipitates a general retreat, by 20 March, panzer rearguards are fighting desperately to defend positions west of their original start-line.

**6th Armeegruppe** Balck; Sixth Army, Hung Third Army, Gille, IV SS Pz Corps; Breith III Pz-Corps, Harteneck I Cav Corps, SS Wiking, SS Totenkopf, Pz Divs 1st, 3rd, 6th, 23rd, three cav divs, Hungarian tanks, infantry, Army troops. After 14 January, 503, 509 Tiger Bns. By 20 January, 274 Pz Kpfw IV-VIs, Jag Pz and SPs. By 6 March, 138 mixed tanks. **Eighth Army** Kreysing (north of Danube) 8th, 20th Pz Divs, remnant battle groups Feldherrnhalle, 13th Pz.

**Sixth SS Pz-Army** Dietrich; Priess I SS Pz Corps, Bittrich II SS Pz Corps, SS Pz-Divs 1st, 2nd, 9th, 12th. Reinforced 6 March, 23rd Pz and two cav divs. By 6 March, 540 tanks and SP guns (320 battle-fit).

**Second Pz-Army** de Angelis; Lanz XXII Mtn Corps, Konrad LXVIII Corps, 16th SS PzGren Div, four Inf divs (two Mtn).

**4th Air Fleet** Dessloch; Deichmann, I Air Corps, by 6 March 850 aircraft. **Red Army/Air Force** 1 January 1945, Malinovsky 2nd UKr Front; Tolbuchin 3rd UK Front; 54 Inf divs; five mech corps; three armd corps, two cav corps. By 6 March, 407 tanks, 965 aircraft.

## Germany in Defeat 1945

Armageddon 1945. Panzer divisions starved of petrol at times to the point of immobility, with few if any towing machines, lacking in ammunition and air support, record local successes against overwhelming odds. All are swept into defeat. The Red Army advancing in overwhelming strength in the east employs tank and motorized forces patterned on the German model and much of its transport supplied by Western Allies. Equally powerful US and British armies dose in from the West.

East: First and Fourth Pz-Armies 12 January 1945, face the eastern threat to Berlin, but

with only four panzer divisions between them to support an infantry defence of the Vistula and Carpathians south of Warsaw (map 18) collapse under massive attacks. Second Pz-Army March 1945 deployed south of Budapest with no armour at all also gives way under Russian pressure. Third Pz Army 8 February 1945 after failing to protect Königsberg and East Prussia, withdraws to Pomerania and the Oder north of Berlin under command of Army Group Vistula; Sixth SS Pz-Army 6 March 1945, the best-equipped formation, defeated in western Hungary (map 19) withdraws to Vienna. The city falls on 13 April. **North-east:** Army Group Courland possesses only two panzer divisions in its order of battle.

**South-west:** Only a single panzer division opposing Anglo-US armies is left in northern Italy.

**West:** Fifth Pz-Army, Europe 16 December 1944 follows an abortive joint offensive Fifth/Sixth SS Pz-Army in the Ardennes (map 17), with encirclement and surrender in the Ruhr. Reduced to forty tanks, Fifth Panzer Army capitulates on 18 April.

Berlin is encircled by the Red Army on 25 April 1945 (see Third Panzer Army, 16 April). Hitler takes his own life on the 30th. Keitel signs the Wehrmacht's capitulation to the Russians in Berlin on 9 May 1945. With the last of the panzer divisions contained in East Prussia surrendering to 2nd BR Front on 14 May, the remnant of a once omnipotent panzer force count for little more than flags on Red Army and Allied Intelligence maps. Dispersed far and wide, surviving units serve mostly in the east with Army Groups Centre and South.







**Berlin LVI** Pz K Weidling; 18th, 20th, 11th SS PzGrDivs. Pz

Division Munchenberg.

**A Gr Centre** Schömer; First PzA Nehring, Fourth PzA Graser: 6th, 8th, 16th, 17th, 19th, 20th, 21st, HG1, FBD, 2nd SS, 10th SS PzDivs; Brandenburg; 10th PzGrDiv.

**A Gr South** Rendulic; Second PzA de Angelis, Sixth SS PzA Dietrich: 1st, 3rd, 23rd, 25th, FGD PzDivs; 1st, 3rd, 5th, 9th, 12th SS PzDivs, Feldherrnhalle.

**A Gr Vistula** Student; Third PzA Raus: 4th SS, 25th PzGr Div. **East Prussia** Von Saucken, formerly German Second Army: 4th, 5th, 7th PzDivs: Gross Deutschland.

**North-east. A Gr Courland** Hilpert, formerly A Gr North: 12th, 14th PzDivs.

**West: A Grs 'B', 'G'.** 'B', Model: Fifth PzA Harpe, 9th Pz Div, Fifteenth Army: PzLehr, 116th Pz. Seventh Army; 2nd, 11th Pz. 'G', Schulz: First Army, 17th SS.

**South west: A Gr "C"** Vietinghoff, Tenth Army; 26th PzDiv. 29th, 90th PzGrDivs.

## **Allgemeine S.S**

The Allgemeine SS ("General SS", literally "Universal SS") was the most numerous branch of the Schutzstaffel (SS) paramilitary forces of Nazi Germany. It was managed by the SS-Hauptamt (English: SS Main Offices). The Allgemeine SS was officially established in the autumn of 1934 to distinguish its members from the SS-Verfügungstruppe (which later became the Waffen-SS) and the SS-Totenkopfverbände (concentration camp guards).

Starting in 1939, foreign units of the Allgemeine SS were raised in occupied countries. They were later consolidated into the *Leitstelle der germanischen SS* (English: Directing Center of the Germanic SS) from 1940. The SS was created on April 4, 1925 and subordinated to the SA on November 1, 1926. It was thus a subunit of the SA and the NSDAP. It was considered to be an elite organization by both party members and the general population.

The main task of the SS was the personal protection of the Führer of the Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler. As early as the winter of 1925 the SS consisted of approximately 1,000 members, but of this number there were barely 200 active members. Heinrich Himmler tried to separate the SS from the SA, and SA leaders generally had no authority over SS personnel from 1927 onwards. Himmler began to systematically develop and expand the SS with stricter requirements for members as well as a general purge of SS members who were identified as drunkards, criminals, or otherwise undesirable for service in the SS.

By December 1929, the number of active SS members had grown to 1,000. As the SS grew even further, Himmler on 29 January 1930 announced to SA leader Ernst Röhm, that:

*The Schutzstaffel is growing, and will probably number 2,000 by the end of this quarter. From that point on the SS would be considered, therefore, de facto independent. By December of that same year, the SS had a membership of 2,727.*

Himmler now looked to another source for recruits to the SS: the SA. Many former members of Röhm's Frontbann joined the SS. In 1926 it had been specified that the SS had to subordinate itself absolutely to the SA, and with that any arbitrary action of the SS was prevented. With local recruitment, SS men owed their loyalty to the respective SA leader. However, by 1929, many SA *Unterführers* had already gone over to Himmler's SS. Hitler assisted Himmler in his first great victory over the SA, by decreeing on November 7, 1930: "The task of the SS is first the practice of the police service within the party. No

*SA leader is entitled to give instructions to the SS!”*

This order split the two organizations from each other, and confirmed thereby the *de jure* independence of the SS from the SA.

### **Formation and service**

After the *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power) by the NSDAP, the SS began

to expand into a massive organization. By March 1933 it included over 52,000 registered members. By December 1933 the SS had increased to over 204,000 members and Himmler ordered a temporary freeze on recruitment. Himmler ordered that “*no one else is taken on, from the end of 1933 to the end of 1935, who is not suited for the SS.*”

On 20 April 1934, Göring and Himmler agreed to put aside their differences (largely because of mutual hatred of the SA). Göring transferred control of the Gestapo to Himmler, who was also named chief of all German police forces outside Prussia. The SS was further cemented when both it and the Gestapo participated in the destruction of the SA during the Night of the Long Knives from 30 June to 2 July 1934. They either killed or arrested every major SA leader – above all Ernst Röhm. Himmler was later named the chief of all German police in June, 1936. Therein, the Gestapo was incorporated into the SiPo with the Kripo (Criminal Police). Heydrich was made head of the SiPo and continued as chief of the SD.<sup>12</sup>



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-H06449  
Foto: o. Ang. | 1. Juli 1938

In August 1934, Himmler received permission from Hitler to form a new organisation from the SS Sonderkommandos and the Politischen Bereitschaften, the SS-Verfügungstruppe (SS-VT). This was a standing armed military force, which in war was to be subordinate to the *Wehrmacht* (“Armed Forces”), but remained under Himmler’s

control in times of peace and under Hitler's personal control regardless. According to this restructure, the SS now housed three different subordinate commands: 1. Allgemeine-SS, 2. Verfügungstruppe 3. SS-Totenkopfverbände

Himmler further conducted additional purges of the SS to include those deemed to be opportunists, alcoholics, homosexuals, or of uncertain racial status. This "house cleaning" removed some 60,000 SS members by December 1935.

By 1938, the Allgemeine SS numbered 485,000 members with 13,867 active SS-officers. In May 1939, the Totenkopfverbände was declared to be a part of the Allgemeine-SS, adding 50,000 new members to the organization (the Totenkopfverbände would later be absorbed by the Waffen-SS in 1942).

Upon the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the SS had solidified into its final form, mainly two large contingents, these being the Allgemeine-SS and Waffen-SS. With Himmler as Chief of the German Police, the SS also controlled the Ordnungspolizei, which over the course of World War II would be increasingly overshadowed and infiltrated by the SS.

## **Hierarchy and structure**

The term *Allgemeine-SS* referred to the "General-SS", meaning those units of the SS considered "main, regular, or standard". By 1938, the Allgemeine-SS was administratively divided into these main sections:

Full-time officers and members of the main SS departments, including the RSHA

Part-time volunteer members of SS regional units

SS security forces, e.g., the Gestapo and Sicherheitsdienst (SD) Concentration Camp staffs of the Totenkopfverbände

Reserve, honorary or otherwise inactive SS members

After World War II began in 1939, the lines between the Allgemeine-SS and the Waffen-SS became increasingly blurred, due largely to the Allgemeine-SS headquarters offices having administrative and supply command over the Waffen-SS. By 1940, all of the Allgemeine-SS had been issued grey war-time uniforms and by 1941 the black SS uniform had been taken out of circulation by most of the SS.

## **Full time SS personnel**

Approximately one third of the Allgemeine-SS were considered "full time"

meaning that they received a salary as government employees, were employed full-time in an SS office, and performed SS duties as their primary occupation. The vast majority of such full-time SS personnel were assigned to the main SS offices, considered part of the Allgemeine-SS, and divided as follows:

SS-Hauptamt (SS-HA):

SS-Hauptamt Persönlicher Stab RFSS (HaPerStab)

SS Personalthauptamt (SS PHA)

SS Führungshauptamt (SS FHA)

Hauptamt SS-Gericht (HA SS-Gericht)

SS-Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA)

SS-Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt (RuSHA)

Hauptamt Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (VOMI)

Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums (RKF or RKFDV)

SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt (SS-WVHA)

Main office commanders and staff were exempt from military conscription. Although many, such as Reinhard Heydrich, served as reservists in the regular German military. Main office members did join the Waffen-SS, where they could accept a lower rank and serve in active combat or be listed as inactive reservists. By 1944, with Germany's looming defeat, the draft exemption for the Allgemeine-SS main offices was lifted and many junior members were ordered into combat with senior members assuming duties as Waffen-SS generals.

### **SS regional units**

The core of the Allgemeine-SS were part-time mustering formations

spread throughout Germany. Members in these regional units would typically meet once a week in uniform, as well as participate in various Nazi Party functions. Activities including drill and ideological instruction, marching in parades, and providing security at various Nazi party rallies. Regional SS units were organized into commands known as *SS-Oberabschnitt* (region), *Abschnitt* (district), and *Standarten* (regiment). Before 1934, SS personnel received no pay and their work was completely voluntarily. After 1933, the *Oberabschnitt* commanders and their staff became regarded as "full time" but the rank and file of the Allgemeine-SS were still part-time only.

Regular Allgemeine-SS personnel were also not exempt from conscription and many were called up to serve in the Wehrmacht. By 1942, most of the part time Allgemeine-SS had either joined the Waffen-SS or had been conscripted into the regular German military. The senior levels of the *Abschnitte* and *Oberabschnitte* were considered draft exempt, but most of these SS leaders and staff were themselves merged into the offices of the SS and Police Leaders which were considered as quasi-military commands with Waffen-SS authority, although on paper still part of the Allgemeine-SS. Draft exemption for these senior leadership staffs was itself lifted in 1944, and most of the remaining Allgemeine-SS personnel were assigned to the Waffen-SS as reservists.

### **Security forces**

From 1936, the state security police forces of the Gestapo and Kripo (Crim

inal Police) were consolidated and placed under the central command of Reinhard Heydrich, already chief of the party *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD), and named *Sicherheitspolizei*. Later from 27 September 1939 forward, they were all folded into the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) which was placed under Heydrich's control. The ordinary uniformed German police, known as the *Ordnungspolizei* (Orpo) were also under SS control after 1936 but never incorporated into the Allgemeine-SS, although many police members were also dual SS members.

The death squad units of the *Einsatzgruppen* were considered part of the Allgemeine-SS and under the operational control of the RSHA. The units were themselves a mixture of civilian (SS auxiliary), police, and SS personnel, although all *Einsatzgruppen* personnel wore grey Waffen-SS type uniforms in the performance of their duties.

During World War II, security force personnel were seen as performing "essential duties" to the Reich and thus were exempt from conscription into military service. Many such

personnel, however, typically joined the Waffen-SS or served in the Wehrmacht military reserve. SS-Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann, for instance, was an Untersturmführer in the Waffen-SS Reserve while Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Kappler was a Reserve Feldwebel (Sergeant) in the German Army.

As Germany began losing World War II, the draft exemption for security forces was slowly lifted, although due to the nature of the Nazi regime, there was a constant need for security personnel up until the very end of the Third Reich. For this reason, many Gestapo, SD, and Kripo members who served as reservists never saw combat until the very last days of the war, if at all.

### **Concentration camp personnel**

All Concentration Camp staffs were originally part of the Allgemeine-SS under the office of the Concentration Camps Inspectorate (Inspektion der Konzentrationslager or IKL). First headed by Theodor Eicke, the Concentration Camps were formed into the Totenkopfverbände after 1934, but then increasingly became divided into the camp service proper and the military Totenkopf formation controlled by the SS-Verfügungstruppe (the early Waffen-SS).

After 1942, the entire camp service was placed under the authority of the Waffen-SS for a variety of administrative and logistical reasons. The ultimate command authority for the camp system during World War II was the SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt (WHVA).

### **Other units**

By late 1940 the Allgemeine-SS also controlled the *Germanische SS*, which were collaborationist organizations modeled after the Allgemeine-SS in several Western European countries.

The Allgemeine-SS also consisted of a female volunteer corps (known as the SS-Helferinnen) and, in the last days of World War II, had authority over the so-called “Auxiliary-SS” which were non-SS personnel conscripted in the SS to serve as concentration camp personnel in the last months of World War II.

### **Ranks**

The ranks of the Allgemeine SS and the Waffen-SS were based upon those

of the SA and used the same titles. However, there was a distinctly separate hierarchical subdivisions of the larger Waffen-SS from its Allgemeine counterpart and an SS member could in fact hold two separate SS ranks. For instance, a *Brigadeführer* (“Brigadier General”) of the Allgemeine SS might only be ranked as a *Rottenführer* (“Lance Corporal”) in the WaffenSS. If this same SS member were an architectural engineer, then the SSHA would issue a third rank of *Sonderführer* (“Lead Technical Specialist”). SS members could also hold reserve commissions in the regular military as well as a Nazi Party political rank. Add to this that many senior SS members were also employees of the Federal government in capacities as ministers, deputies, etc., and an SS member could in the end have as many as five ranks in various organizations as well as a number of additional titles. Per one SS historian:

*Multiple and overlapping commands were very commonplace... A man could hold one post while temporarily assigned to another and hold rank in the Allgemeine-SS, Waffen-SS and Polizei simultaneously... I'm thoroughly convinced even Berlin was not 100% sure who was in certain positions at exact points in time, confirmed by individual BDC records.*



- Mark Yerger, *Allgemeine-SS*

In 1944, nearly every SS general was granted equivalent Waffen-SS rank, without regard to previous military service. This was mainly ordered so to give SS-generals authority over military units and POW camps. Also, in the event of capture by the Allies, SS-Generals would be given status as military prisoners rather than captured police officials. This distinction was observed by British and American forces in the West, but hardly ever even noticed by the Soviet Red Army, in particular in situations where SS and Police Leaders or other SS units involved in genocide, would fall into Soviet hands. Friedrich Jecklen, who was granted Waffen-SS rank in 1944, was captured by the Russians and held as a criminal with no status given to his military rank.

### **SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz**

*SSJunkerschule Bad Tölz* was the officers' training school for the WaffenSS. It was the SS equivalent of Britain's Sandhurst and the USA's West Point. The school was established in 1937 and constructed by Alois Degano, in the town of Bad Tölz which is about 30 miles south of Munich and the location was seemingly chosen because it had both good transport links and was in an inspiring location. The design and construction of the school was intended to impress the staff, students, visitors and passers-by. A sub camp of the Dachau concentration camp was located in the town of Bad Tölz which provided labour for the SS-Junkerschule and the Zentralbauleitung (Central Administration Building). The School operated until the end of World War II in 1945 and after the war the former SS-Junkerschule was the base of the U.S. Army's 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group until 1991

In 1934, the armed branch of the Schutzstaffel (SS) then known as the SSVT, started to recruit officers into its ranks. The German Army and its Prussian heritage, looked for officers of good breeding, who had at least graduated from secondary school. By contrast the SS-VT offered men the chance to become an officer no matter what education they had received or their social standing.<sup>13</sup>



In 1936 Himmler selected former Lieutenant General Paul Hausser to be appointed Inspector of the SS-VT with the rank of Brigadeführer, he set about transforming the SS-VT into a creditable military force that was a match for the regular army and transformed the officer selection system. The school was opened in 1936 by Adolf Hitler and would use the regular army training methods and used former Army officers as instructors to train their potential officers to be combat effective. Because of their backgrounds some of the cadets required basic training in non military matters. The cadets were issued books on etiquette that contained instructions on table manners “Cutlery is held only in the fingers and not with the whole hand” and even the correct way to close a letter “Heil Hitler! yours sincerely XXXX”. Instruction was also given on Nazi ideology during lectures, but most instruction was a mixture of athletics and military field exercises. The SS spared no expense in building the School, the facilities included a football stadium surrounded by an athletics track; building dedicated to boxing, gymnastics, indoor ball games, a heated swimming pool and a sauna. The instructors matched the facilities and at one time eight of the twelve coaches were the German National champions in their fields.

### **Selection**

The officer candidates had to meet stringent requirements before being allowed into the officer schools; All SS officers had to be a minimum height of 5 foot 10 inches (5 ft 11” for the *Leibstandarte*) and had to serve in the ranks prior to being considered for a place at the SS-Junkerschule, and had to serve for at least six months to a year before being considered. Typically, a Waffen-SS member reaching the rank of Rottenführer could choose either to embark on the career path of an SS-non-commissioned officer or could apply to join the officer corps of the Waffen-SS. If choosing the latter, he was required to obtain a written recommendation from their commander and undergo a racial and political screening process to determine eligibility for commission as an SS officer.<sup>14</sup>



If accepted into the SS officer program, an SS member would be assigned to the SS-Junkerschule and would be appointed to the rank of SS-Junker upon arrival. Situations did exist, however, where SS members would hold their previous enlisted rank while at the SS-Junkerschule and only be appointed to the rank of SS-Junker after a probationary period had passed. This officer candidate system was to ensure that future SS officers had prior enlisted experience and that there were no “direct appointments” in the Waffen-SS officer corps as was often the case in other SS branches such as the *Gestapo* and *Sicherheitsdienst*. About 150 Norwegians were “directly appointed” to the Waffen-SS officer corps on account of their training in Norway’s military. The underperformance by many of them eventually contributed to front line Waffen-SS officers mandatory training at the *Junkerschule*, and 141 other Norwegians graduated from that training.)

## Curriculum

Instruction at the school ranged from the playing of war games in sand boxes to studying Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. Many Cadets had already served in the Hitler Youth and brought up under the Nazi propaganda machine. Nazi ideology was an important part of the curriculum and one Cadet in every three was eliminated from the five month course during examinations. One of the goals of the school was to produce fighting officers, and classes were given in assault tactics, which built on the mobile tactics introduced to the German Army at the end of World War I.

The School adjutant Felix Steiner is reported to have said: “We require a supple adaptable type of soldier, athletic of bearing and capable of more than the average endurance.”

The timetable of the School was as follows: tactics, terrain and map reading, combat training and weapons training, General practical service (weapons technology, shooting training, war exercises), religious education, military, SS and police, administration, physical training, weapons doctrine, pioneer teaching, current events, tank tactics, vehicle maintenance, sanitary engineering, Air Force doctrine.

## S.S Verfügungstruppe

The SS *Verfügungstruppe* (SS-VT) (*English: SS Dispositional Troops*) was formed in 1934 as combat troops for the NSDAP. By 1940 these military SS units had become the nucleus of the Waffen-SS.

On 17 August 1938 Adolf Hitler decreed that the SS-VT was neither a part of the police nor the German Wehrmacht, but military-trained men at the disposal of the Führer in war or peace. The men were to be trained in accordance with the rules of the SS and manned by volunteers who had completed their service in the Reichsarbeitsdienst (or RAD, Reich Labour Service).

The SS-VT was formed on 24 September 1934 from a merger of various Nazi and paramilitary formations such as the SS Special Detachments (SS *Sonderkommandos*) and the Headquarters Guard (SS *Stabswache*) units. The SS-VT was to be made up of three regiments modeled on the infantry regiments of the German Army (Heer) and according to their regulations. Each regiment would contain three battalions, a motorcycle company and mortar company. The unit was officially designated SS-*Verfügungstruppe* ("Dispositional troops", i.e. troops at the personal disposal of the Führer). The formation was to be placed at the "disposal" of the army in time of war. The existence of the SS-*Verfügungstruppe* (SS-VT) was publicly declared on 16 March 1935 by Hitler in a speech at the Reichstag. The SS-VT trained alongside Hitler's personal body guard the *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* (LAH), which after 13 April 1934, was known as the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (LSSAH). The LSSAH continued to serve exclusively as a personal protection unit and honor guard during this timeframe.

By 1937 the SS was divided into three branches: the *Allgemeine-SS* (General SS), the SS-*Verfügungstruppe*, and the SS-*Totenkopfverbände* (SS-TV) which administered the concentration camps.

The military formations under Himmler's command on 1 September 1939 consisted of several subgroups:

Hitler's bodyguard unit the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* under *Obergruppenführer* Josef "Sepp" Dietrich.

The Inspectorate of *Verfügungstruppe* under Hausser, which commanded the *Deutschland*, *Gruppenführer* Paul Germania and *Der Führer* regiments.

The Concentration Camps Inspectorate (Inspektion der Konzentrationslager) under *Gruppenführer* Theodor Eicke, which fielded four militarized Death's-Head *Standarten* comprising camp guards of the SS-*Totenkopfverbände*. These would be formed into a division after the conquest of Poland, and folded into the Waffen-SS in August 1940. These troops wore the SS-TV skull and crossbones rather than the SSVT "SS" runes. There were in addition combat-trained non-SS police units of *Obergruppenführer* Kurt Daluege's *Ordnungspolizei* which reported to Himmler in his capacity as Chief of German Police. For the 1940 campaigns these also would be formed into a division, which would be placed under Waffen-SS control in January 1941 and merged into it in February 1942.

Early operations

Elements of the SS-VT served with the Wehrmacht during the occupation

of the Sudetenland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. For those operations, the SS-VT was under the command of the army. The SS-VT also formed an Artillery Regiment during

this timeframe which was used to fill the gaps in a number of army units for those events. The SS-VT regiments *Deutschland* and *Germania* along with the *Leibstandarte* participated in the invasion of Poland, with *Der Führer* (recruited in Austria after the Anschluss) in reserve at Prague. In September 1939, a combined unit of SS-VT and Heer (Army) troops conducted operations as Panzer Division *Kempf* during the invasion of Poland. It fought alongside Army units at Rozan, Modlin, Łomża and Kmiczyn. The division was disbanded near the Polish city of Nidzica on 7 October 1939.

Events during the invasion of Poland raised doubts over the combat effectiveness of the SS-VT. Their willingness to fight was never in any doubt; at times they were almost too eager to fight. The OKW or Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces) reported that the SS-VT had unnecessarily exposed themselves to risks and acted recklessly, incurring heavier losses than Army troops. They also stated that the SS-VT was poorly trained and its officers unsuitable for command. In its defence the SS-VT insisted that it had been hampered by fighting piecemeal instead of as one formation, and being improperly equipped to carry out what had been required of it. Heinrich Himmler insisted that the SS-VT should be allowed to fight in its own formations, under its own commanders, while the OKW tried to have the SS-VT disbanded altogether. Hitler chose a compromise path. He ordered that the SS-VT form its own divisions but the divisions would be under army command.

### **Development of the Waffen-SS**

In the wake of the Polish Invasion, there were four SS combat regiments:

*Leibstandarte*, *Deutschland*, *Germania* and *Der Führer*. The latter three were reorganized into the SS-Verfügungs-Division, and the *Leibstandarte* was expanded into a motorized brigade. In addition there were the armed but ill-trained *Totenkopfstandarten*; three of these together with *SS Heimwehr Danzig* were organized into the *Totenkopf-Division* under Eicke's command. A further division, the *Polizei-Division*, was created from the *Ordnungspolizei*. These formations took part in Operation *Fall Gelb* against the Low Countries and France in 1940.

The SS-VT troops first saw action in the main drive for the Dutch central front around Rotterdam. After the city had been captured, the Division, along with other divisions, intercepted a French force and forced them back to the area of Zeeland and Antwerp. They were next used to mop-up small pockets of resistance in the areas already captured by the German advance.

The SS-VT was renamed the "Waffen-SS" in a speech made by Adolf Hitler in July 1940; on 1 August Himmler established the *Kommandoamt der Waffen-SS* (Waffen-SS Command Office) within the new *SS-Führungshauptamt* (FHA) under *Gruppenführer* Hans Jüttner. The *Totenkopf* Division and other SS-TV combat units were transferred to FHA control. In December 1940 the *Germania* Regiment would be removed from the *Verfügungs-Division* and used to form the cadre of a new division, SS-Division *Germania*, comprising mostly "Nordic" volunteers from the newly conquered territories, Danes, Norwegians, Dutch and Flemings; it was soon renamed *Wiking*. At the start of 1941 the *Verfügungs-Division* would be redubbed "*Reich*" (in 1942 "*Das Reich*"), and the *Polizei* division brought under Waffen-SS administration. The *Leibstandarte* would be expanded to a division for Operation Barbarossa.

When the Waffen-SS divisions were assigned numbers much later in the war these first



formations, *Leibstandarte*, *Das Reich*, *Totenkopf*, *Polizei* and *Wiking* would be recognized as SS divisions 1 through 5.

### ***SS-Totenkopfverbände***

*SS-Totenkopfverbände* (SS-TV), rendered in English as “Death’s-Head Units,” was the SS organization responsible for administering the Nazi concentration camps for the Third Reich.

The SS-TV was an independent unit within the SS with its own ranks and command structure. It ran the camps throughout Germany, such as Dachau, Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald; in Nazi-occupied Europe, it ran Auschwitz in German occupied Poland and Mauthausen in Austria as well as numerous other concentration and death camps. The death camps’ primary function was genocide and included Treblinka, Belżec extermination camp and Sobibor. It was responsible for facilitating what was called the Final Solution, known since as the Holocaust, in collaboration with the Reich Main Security Office and the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office or WVHA.

At the outbreak of WWII one of the first combat units of the Waffen-SS, the SS Division *Totenkopf*, was formed from SS-TV personnel. It soon developed a reputation for ferocity and fanaticism, participating in several war crimes such as the Le Paradis massacre in 1940 during the Fall of France and the murder of Russian civilians in Operation Barbarossa. While the *Totenkopf* (English: Death’s Head) was the universal cap badge of the SS, the SS-TV also wore the insignia on the right collar to distinguish itself from other SS units.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 192-208  
Foto: o. Ang. | Oktober 1941

### **Formation**

On 26 June 1933, *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler appointed SS

*Oberführer* Theodor Eicke the *Kommandant* of the first Nazi concentration camp at Dachau.<sup>15</sup> Eicke requested a permanent unit that would be subordinate only to him and Himmler granted the request; the *SS-Wachverband* (Guard Unit) was formed. Promoted on 30 January 1934 to *SSBrigadeführer* (equivalent to Major-general in the Army), Eicke as commander of Dachau began new reforms. He reorganized the SS camp, establishing new guarding provisions, which included blind obedience to orders, and tightening disciplinary and punishment regulations for detainees, which were adopted by all concentration camps of the *Third Reich* on 1 January 1934. Following the Night of the Long Knives (at the end June 1934), Eicke, who had played a major role in the affair, was again promoted to the rank of *SS-Gruppenführer* and appointed *Inspector of Concentration Camps* and Commander of SS guard formations.

Personnel from Dachau then went on to work at Sachsenhausen and Oranienburg, where Eicke established his central office. In 1935 Dachau became the training center for the concentration camps service. Many of the early recruits came from the ranks of the SA and *Allgemeine SS*. Senior roles were filled by personnel from the German police service. On 29 March 1936, concentration camp guards and administration units were officially designated as the *SS-Totenkopfverbände*.

By April 1938, the SS-TV had four regiments of three storm battalions with three infantry companies, one machine gun company and medical, communication and transportation units.

## **Development**

When the *SS-Totenkopfverbände* (SS-TV) was formally established in

1936, the group was organized into six *Wachtruppen* situated at each of Germany's major concentration camps. Theodor Eicke, at this stage, was technically only the commander of the Dachau concentration camp (need citation), although it was without question that he was the effective head of the entire SS-TV.

In 1935, as the concentration camp system within Germany expanded, groups of camps were organized into *Wachsturmbanne* (battalions) under the office of the Inspector of Concentration Camps who answered directly to the SS headquarters office and Heinrich Himmler. In 1937, the *Wachsturmbanne* were in turn organized into three main *SS-Totenkopfstandarten* (regiments).

By 1936, Eicke had also begun to establish military formations of concentration camp personnel which eventually became the *Totenkopf* Division and other units of the *Waffen-SS*. In the early days of the military camp service formation, the group's exact chain of command was contested since Eicke as *Führer der Totenkopfverbände* exercised personal control of the group but also, being a military SS formation, authority over the armed units was claimed by the *SS-Verfügungstruppe* (who would get it in August 1940). But at this time Eicke and Himmler envisioned the armed SSTV not as combat soldiers, but as troops for carrying out what were euphemistically described as "police and security operations" behind the front lines. Thus Eicke's men were trained by a cadre of camp personnel without outside intervention; the first major training exercise in 1935 resulted in the clearing of the entire Dachau camp for several weeks while the *Totenkopf* military formation was organized.

On 17 August 1938 Hitler decreed, at Himmler's request, the SS-TV to be the reserve for the *SS-Verfügungstruppe*; this would over the course of the war lead to a constant flux of

men between the Waffen-SS and the concentration camps. Himmler's intention, however, was simply to expand his private army by using the SS-TV (as well as the police, which he also controlled) as a manpower pool. Himmler sought and obtained a further decree, issued on 18 May 1939, which authorized the expansion of the SS-TV to 50,000 men, and directed the Army to provide it with military equipment, something the Army had resisted. By the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939 Eicke's SS-TV field forces numbered four infantry regiments and a cavalry regiment, plus two battalions clandestinely placed in independent Danzig. However, their role in the invasion of Poland was not military; unlike the *Leibstandarte* and the SS-VT they were not under Army High Command (OKH) control, but Himmler's. "Their military capabilities were employed instead in terrorizing the civilian population through acts that included hunting down straggling Polish soldiers, confiscating agricultural produce and livestock, and torturing and murdering large numbers of Polish political leaders, aristocrats, businessmen, priests, intellectuals, and Jews." The behavior of these *Standarten* in Poland elicited disgust and protests from officers of the Army, including 8th Army commander Johannes Blaskowitz who wrote a lengthy memorandum to von Brauchitsch detailing SS-TV atrocities (to no avail).

In the wake of the Polish conquest the three senior *Totenkopf-Standarten* were combined with the SS Heimwehr Danzig and some support units transferred from the Army to create the *Totenkopf-Division*, with Eicke in command. From fall 1939 to spring 1940 a massive recruitment effort raised no fewer than twelve new *TK-Standarten* (four times the size of the SS-VT) in anticipation of the coming attack on France. By now, however, Eicke's ambition had aroused Himmler's suspicion, and Hausser's and Dietrich's resentment, especially his designation of *TK-Standarten* as reserves for his *Totenkopf-Division* alone, and his appropriation of *Verfügungstruppe* military supplies which were stored at Eicke's concentration camps. After the *TK-Division*, and Eicke personally, performed poorly during Fall Gelb Himmler resolved to curb his subordinate. Cynically using as justification several well-publicized atrocities committed by the Division in France, on 15 August 1940 he dissolved Eicke's Inspectorate of *SS-Totenkopfstandarten* and transferred the *Totenkopf-Division*, the independent *TK-Standarten*, and their reserve and replacement system to the newly formed *Waffen-SS* high command. In February 1941 the *Totenkopf* designation was removed from the names of all units other than the *TK-Division* and the camp *Totenkopfwachsturmbanne*, and their personnel exchanged the Death's-Head collar insignia for the *Waffen-SS* Sig-runes. The camp system expanded greatly after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, when large numbers of Russian soldiers were captured. Some were transferred to the camps, where their inhumane treatment became normal.

The *Totenkopf* Division still had close ties to the camp service and its members continued to wear the Death's-Head as their unit insignia. They were known for brutal tactics, a result of the original doctrine of "no pity" which Eicke had instilled in his camp personnel as far back as 1934, together with the fact that the original *Totenkopfstandarte* had "trained" themselves. The Division's ineffectiveness in France, as well as its war crimes, can in part be explained by its personnel who were more thugs than soldiers. However, over the course of the savage fighting in the East (during which the Division was twice effectively destroyed and recreated), the *Totenkopf* became one of the crack combat units of the German military. Very few of the men who were part of the 1939 *Standarten* in Poland were still in the Division by 1945.<sup>16</sup>



### **Camp organization**

In 1941, the concentration camps themselves were part of a massive system both in Germany and the occupied territories. By this time, special death camps had also come into operation while an extensive labor camp system was providing forced labor to the SS. As a result, the entire concentration camp system was placed under the authority of the SS-*Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt* (WVHA) with the Inspector of Concentration Camps now a subordinate to the Chief of the WVHA. The camps themselves were then administratively separated into three main divisions of Labor Camps, Concentration Camps, and Death Camps.

As a final measure, in 1942 all camp personnel were folded into the Waffen-SS to allow for easier rotation of wounded Waffen-SS personnel into camp positions and for camp personnel to be easily transferred into combat units should the need arise. This last measure was frequently used for SS personnel who were deemed “too soft” for duty in a concentration camp or for those who showed compassion to prisoners or refused to obey illegal orders such as the gassing of prisoners or the shooting of women and children. This policy of quick transfer into a combat unit was a large incentive for SS personnel to participate in atrocities, as the alternative could be front line service on the Eastern Front. On the reverse, the SS procedures for camp personnel who refused to engage in war crimes proved that there were never any cases where SS soldiers were under threat of death unless they carried out atrocities (a common defense claim of captured SS personnel at the end of the war). At the trial of Treblinka camp personnel, it was in fact proven that there had never been a single case in the SS where someone was killed for refusing to carry out an illegal order and that such persons were simply transferred into combat with the Waffen-SS. Within the camps themselves, there existed a hierarchy of camp titles and positions which were unique only to the camp service. Each camp was commanded by a *Kommandant*, sometimes referred to as *Lagerkommandant*, who was assisted by a camp adjutant and command staff. The prison barracks within the camp were supervised by a

*Rapportführer* who was responsible for daily roll call and the camp daily schedule. The individual prisoner barracks were overseen by junior SS-NCOs called *Blockführer* who, in turn had one to two squads of SS soldiers responsible for overseeing the prisoners. Within extermination camps, the *Blockführer* was in charge of the *Sonderkommando* and was also the person who would physically gas victims in the camp gas chambers.

The camp perimeter and watch towers were overseen by a separate formation called the Guard Battalion, or the *Wachbattalion*. The guard battalion commander was responsible for providing watch bills to man guard towers and oversaw security patrols outside the camp. The battalion was organized on typical military lines with companies, platoons, and squads. The battalion commander was subordinate directly to the camp commander.

Concentration camps also had supply and medical personnel, attached to the headquarters office under the camp commander, as well as a security office with Gestapo and *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) personnel attached temporarily to the camp. These security personnel, while answering to the camp commander, were also under direct command of *Sicherheitspolizei* (SiPo) and RSHA commanders independent of the camps. As a result, SD and Gestapo personnel within the concentration camps were seen as “outsiders” by the full-time camp personnel and frequently looked down upon with distrust by the regular SS-TV members.

In addition to the regular SS personnel assigned to the Concentration Camp, there also existed a prisoner system of trustees known as Kapos who performed a wide variety of duties from administration to overseeing other groups of prisoners. The *Sonderkommando* were special groups of Jewish prisoner who assisted in the extermination camps with the disposal of bodies and other tasks. The duty of actually gassing prisoners was, however, always carried out by the SS.

## **Operations**

Eicke, in his role as the commander of the SS-TV, continued to reorganize the camp system by dismantling smaller camps. By August 1937 only Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Ravensbrück remained in Germany. In 1938 Eicke oversaw the building of new camps in Austria following the *Anschluss*, such as Mauthausen.

Eicke's reorganization and the introduction of forced labor made the camps one of the SS's most powerful tools, but it earned him the enmity of RSHA director, Reinhard Heydrich, who was attempting to take over control of Dachau. However, Himmler wanted to keep a separation of power so Eicke remained in command of the SS-TV and camp operations. This kept control of the camps out of the hands of the Gestapo or the SD. In September 1939, Eicke became the commander of the SS Totenkopf Division. In 1940, the Concentration Camps Inspectorate became part of the *Amt D of the Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt* under SS*Obergruppenführer* Oswald Pohl. Eicke was replaced by his Head of Staff, SS*Gruppenführer* Richard Glücks who continued to manage the camp administration until the end of the war.<sup>17</sup>





In 1942 Glücks was increasingly involved in the administration of the Endlösung, supplying personnel to assist in Aktion Reinhardt (although the death camps of Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor were administered by SS-und Polizei-führer Odilo Globocnik of the General Government). In July 1942, Glücks met Himmler to discuss medical experiments on concentration camp inmates. All extermination orders were issued from Glücks' office to SS-TV commands throughout Nazi Germany and occupied Europe. He specifically authorized the purchase of *Zyklon B* for use at Auschwitz.

But as the tide of war changed in Europe, conditions became increasingly harsh for surviving camp inmates. In 1945 SS-TV units began to receive orders to conceal as much of the evidence of The Holocaust as possible. Camps were destroyed, sick prisoners were shot and others were marched on death marches away from the advancing Allies. The SS-TV were also instrumental in the execution of hundreds of political prisoners to prevent their liberation.<sup>18</sup>



Sonderarchiv, SS 102-025  
Foto: o. Ang. i. e. Dat.

By April 1945 many SS-TV had left their posts. Due to their notoriety, some removed their *death head* insignia to hide their identities. Camp duties were increasingly turned over to so-called “Auxiliary-SS”, soldiers and civilians conscripted as camp guards so that the *Totenkopf* men could escape. However, many were caught by Allied war crime investigators and tried at Nuremberg between 1946 and 1949.

### **SS KZ personnel.**

From its inception, Eicke fostered an attitude of “inflexible harshness” in

the SS-TV. This core belief continued to influence guards in all concentration camps even after Eicke had taken over command of the SS *Totenkopf* Division. Recruits were taught to hate their enemies through tough training regimes and Nazi indoctrination.

SS-TV personnel lost any compassion for camp inmates. Within camps, guards created an atmosphere of controlled, disciplined cruelty that subjugated prisoners. This brutal ethos influenced some of the SS-TV’s most infamous members including Rudolf Höß, Franz Ziereis, Karl Otto Koch, Max Kögel and Amon Goeth.

In the last days of World War II, a special group called the “Auxiliary-SS” (SS-*Mannschaft*) was formed as a last-ditch effort to keep concentration camps running and allow regular SS personnel to escape. Auxiliary-SS members were not considered regular SS personnel, but were conscripted members from other branches of the German military, the Nazi Party, and the *Volkssturm*. Such personnel wore a distinctive twin swastika collar

patch and served as camp guard and administrative personnel until the surrender of Germany.

### **Combat formations**

1st TK-Standarte *Oberbayern*. Formed 1937 at Dachau. During the Pol

ish invasion conducted “security operations” behind the lines. Redesignated 1. SS-Totenkopf-Infanterie-Regiment and assigned to the *Totenkopf* Division 10/39.

2nd TK-Standarte *Brandenburg*. Formed 1937 at Oranienburg. During the Polish invasion conducted “security operations” behind the lines. Redesignated 2. SS-Totenkopf-Infanterie-Regiment and assigned to the *Totenkopf* Division 10/39.

3rd TK-Standarte *Thüringen*. Formed 1937 at Buchenwald. During the Polish invasion conducted “security operations” behind the lines. Redesignated 3. SS-Totenkopf-Infanterie-Regiment and assigned to the *Totenkopf* Division, with some men forming the cadre of the 10. TK-Standarte, 11/39.

4th TK-Standarte *Ostmark*. Formed 1938 at Vienna and Berlin. III Sturmbann *Götze* detached to form the core of SS Heimwehr Danzig 7/39. Garrison duty at Prague 10/39 and in Holland 6/40. Designated 4. SS-Infanterie-Regiment 2/41, assigned to 2. SS-Infanterie-Brigade 5/41.

SS-Wachsturmbann *Eimann*. Formed 1939 at Danzig. During the Polish invasion conducted “security operations” behind the lines. Dissolved 1940.

TK-Reiter-Standarte. Formed 9/39 in Poland to conduct “security operations” behind the lines. Expanded and divided into 1. and 2. TK-ReiterStandarten 5/40. Redesignated 1. and 2. SS-Kavallerie-Regimenter 2/41, combined into SS-Kavallerie-Brigade (later SS-Kavallerie-Division *Florian Geyer*) 9/41.

5th TK-Standarte *Dietrich Eckart*. Formed 1939 at Berlin and Oranienburg. Designated 5. SS-Infanterie-Regiment 2/41, assigned to 2. SS-Infanterie-Brigade 5/41.

6th TK-Standarte. Formed 1939 at Prague. Garrison duty in Norway 5/40. Designated 6. SS-Infanterie-Regiment 2/41, assigned to Kampfgruppe Nord (later 6. SS-Gebirgs-Division *Nord*) spring 41.

7th TK-Standarte. Formed 1939 at Brno. Garrison duty in Norway 5/40. Designated 7. SS-Infanterie-Regiment 2/41, assigned to Kampfgruppe Nord (later 6. SS-Gebirgs-Division *Nord*) spring 41.

8th TK-Standarte. Formed 1939 at Crakow. Designated 8. SS-Infanterie-Regiment 2/41, assigned to 1. SS-Infanterie-Brigade 4/41.

9th TK-Standarte. Formed 1939 at Danzig. Reorganized (with elements of St. 12) into Standarte “K” (Kirkenes, Norway) 8-11/40, redesignated 9. SS-Infanterie-Regiment 2/41, assigned to Kampfgruppe Nord spring 41. Incorporated into SS-Regiment *Thule* 8/42.

10th TK-Standarte. Formed 1939 at Buchenwald. Garrison duties in Poland 1940.

Designated 10. SS-Infanterie-Regiment 2/41, assigned to 1. SS-Infanterie-Brigade 4/41.

11th TK-Standarte. Formed 1939 at Radom. Garrison duty in Holland 5/40. Assigned to SS-Infanterie-Division (mot) *Reich* to replace the 2. SS-Infanterie-Regiment *Germania* 12/40 and redesignated 11. SS-Infanterie-Regiment.

TK-Standarten 12-16 were raised in the winter of 1939-40, but disbanded the following summer, their personnel used to fill out other units.

### **Waffen S.S**

The Waffen-SS (*Armed SS*) was created as the armed wing of the Nazi

Party's *Schutzstaffel* ("Protective Squadron"), and gradually developed into a multi-ethnic and multi-national military force of Nazi Germany. The Waffen-SS grew from three regiments to over 38 divisions during World War II, and served alongside the *Heer* (regular army) but was never formally part of it. Adolf Hitler resisted integrating the Waffen-SS into the army, as it was to remain the armed wing of the Party and to become an elite police force once the war was won. Prior to the war it was under the control of the *SS Führungshauptamt* (SS operational command office) beneath *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler. Upon mobilization its tactical control was given to the High Command of the Armed Forces (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*).

Initially membership was only open to people of Germanic "Aryan" origin, who were said to be the *Herrenvolk* (master race), according to Nazi racial ideology. The rules were partially relaxed in 1940, although Jews remained banned. Hitler authorized the formation of units composed largely or solely of foreign volunteers and conscripts. By the end of the war, non-Germans made up approximately 60 percent of the Waffen-SS.

At the post-war Nuremberg Trials the Waffen-SS was condemned as a criminal organization due to its essential connection to the Nazi Party and involvement in numerous war crimes. Waffen-SS veterans were denied many of the rights afforded to veterans who had served in the *Heer* (army), *Luftwaffe* (air force), or *Kriegsmarine* (navy). An exception was made for Waffen-SS conscripts sworn in after 1943, who were exempted because of their involuntary servitude.

### **Origins (1929–1939)**

The origins of the Waffen-SS can be traced back to the selection of a group of 120 SS men in March 1933 by Josef "Sepp" Dietrich to form the *Sonderkommando Berlin*. By November 1933 the formation was 800 men strong, and at a remembrance ceremony in Munich for the tenth anniversary of the failed Munich Putsch the regiment swore allegiance to Hitler. The oaths pledged were *Pledging loyalty to him alone* and *Obedience unto death*. The formation was given the title *Leibstandarte* (Bodyguard Regiment) *Adolf Hitler* (LAH). On 13 April 1934, by order of Himmler, the regiment became known as the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (LSSAH). The *Leibstandarte* demonstrated their loyalty in June 1934 during the Night of the Long Knives, the purge of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA). The SA had over two million members at the end of 1933. Led by one of Hitler's oldest comrades, Ernst Röhm, the SA represented a threat to Hitler's relationship with the German Army and threatened to sour his relations with the conservatives of the country, people whose support Hitler needed to solidify his position in the German government. Hitler decided to act against the SA. The SS was put in charge of eliminating Röhm and the other high-ranking officers of the SA.

The Night of the Long Knives between 30 June and 2 July 1934 saw the killing of approximately 82 SA men, including almost its entire leadership, effectively ending the power of the SA. This action was largely carried out by the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*. In September 1934, Adolf Hitler authorized the formation of the military wing of the Nazi Party and approved the formation of the *SS-Verfügungstruppe* (SS-VT), a special service troop under Hitler's command. The SS-VT had to depend on the German Army for its supply of weapons and military training and they had control of the recruiting system, through local draft boards responsible for assigning conscripts to the different branches of the Wehrmacht, to meet quotas set by the German High Command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* or OKW in German). The SS was given the lowest priority for recruits.

Even with the difficulties presented by the quota system, Heinrich Himmler formed two new SS regiments, the *SS Germania* and *SS Deutschland*, which together with the *Leibstandarte* and a communications unit made up the SS-VT. At the same time Himmler established the SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz and SS-Junkerschule Braunschweig for training officers to lead the new regiments. Both schools used the regular army training methods and used former Army officers to train potential officers. The officer candidates had to meet stringent requirements before being allowed entry to the schools: all SS officers had to be a minimum height of 180 cm (about 5 foot 11 inches) for the *Leibstandarte* and they also had to have served some time in the ranks.

Members of the SS could be of any religion, but atheists and Jews were not allowed. In 1937, Himmler wrote in a letter to a pastor that an SS man's religious denomination was his own personal choice. Himmler wrote, "Atheism is the only world-view or religious view that is not tolerated within the SS." Himmler resented the fact that Christianity or the Christian churches could forbid SS men from having any leadership role in the church. In 1936, Himmler selected former Lieutenant General Paul Hausser to be Inspector of the SS-VT with the rank of *Brigadeführer*. Hausser transformed the SS-VT into a credible military force that was a match for the regular army.

On 17 August 1938, Hitler declared that the SS-VT would have a role in domestic as well as foreign affairs, which transformed this growing armed force into the rival that the army had feared. He decreed that service in the SS-VT qualified to fulfil military service obligations, although service in the *SS-Totenkopfverbände* or SS-TV would not. Some units of the SS-TV would, in the case of war, be used as reserves for the SS-VT, which did not have its own reserves. For all its training, the SS-VT was untested in a combat situation. This changed in 1938, when two opportunities arose with the Anschluss of Austria in March and the occupation of the Sudetenland in October. A battalion of the *Leibstandarte* was chosen to accompany the Army troops in occupying Austria, and the three regiments of the SS-VT participated in the occupation of the Sudetenland. In both actions no resistance was met.

## **Obergruppenführer**

Was a Nazi Party paramilitary rank that was first created in 1932 as a rank of the SA. Until 1942, it was the highest SS rank inferior only to *Reichsführer-SS* (Heinrich Himmler). Translated as "senior group leader", the rank of *SA-Obergruppenführer* was held by members of the *Oberste SAFührung* (Supreme SA Command) and also by veteran commanders of certain *SA-Gruppen* (SA groups). The rank of *Obergruppenführer* was considered senior to *Gruppenführer*.

As an SS rank, *Obergruppenführer* was created due to the growth and expansion of the SS under Heinrich Himmler. Himmler was one of the first SS officers appointed to the rank of *SS-Obergruppenführer*, and held the rank while simultaneously serving as the *Reichsführer-SS*. At the time Himmler held the rank of *Obergruppenführer*, *Reichsführer* was simply a title and not yet an actual rank.

In the early days of the SS, the rank of *Obergruppenführer* was occasionally used to make two SS leaders equal in seniority, so as to prevent a power struggle within the Nazi Party. Such was the case with Kurt Daluge, who commanded most of the SS in the Berlin region between 1930 and 1934. To avoid having the SS split into two separate entities, one based in Northern Germany and the other in Bavaria, Adolf Hitler promoted Daluge to



the new rank of *Obergruppenführer* making him equal in rank to Himmler.

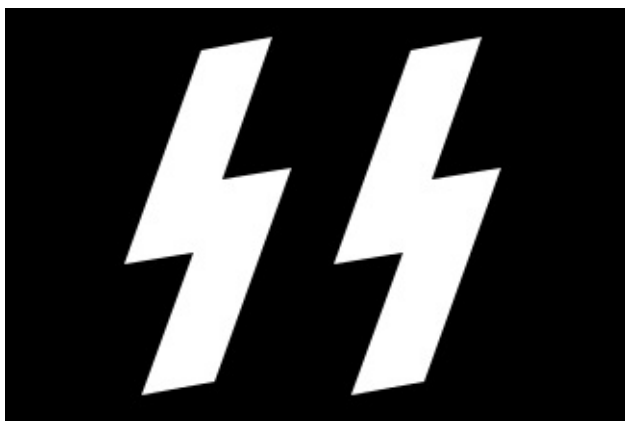
After the Night of the Long Knives, the SS and the SA became two separate organizations. The SA continued to use the rank of *Obergruppenführer*, but the title gained predominance mainly in the SS. With the Nazi Party in power, and the SS a state agency of Germany, *SS-Obergruppenführer* was considered the highest rank of the *Allgemeine SS* (equivalent to lieutenant general on US and UK charts) with the exception of Himmler's special rank of *Reichsführer-SS*. However, within the *Waffen-SS*, the rank of *SSGruppenführer* was equivalent to a Generalleutnant and a *SS-Obergruppenführer* came to be considered the equivalent of a General; holders were titled in full *SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS*. Ninety-eight men were to hold *SS-Obergruppenführer* rank, 21 of whom served in the *Waffen-SS*. The rank would remain the highest SS general officer rank until April 1942, when the rank of *SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer* was created.

The rank of *Obergruppenführer* was held by some of the most notorious figures in the SS, with Reinhard Heydrich and Ernst Kaltenbrunner both bearing the rank. Karl Wolff was another holder of the rank who was captured alive by the Allies after the close of Second World War. *SS-Obergruppenführer* was also the standard rank for SS and Police Leaders as well as corps commanders of the *Waffen-SS*

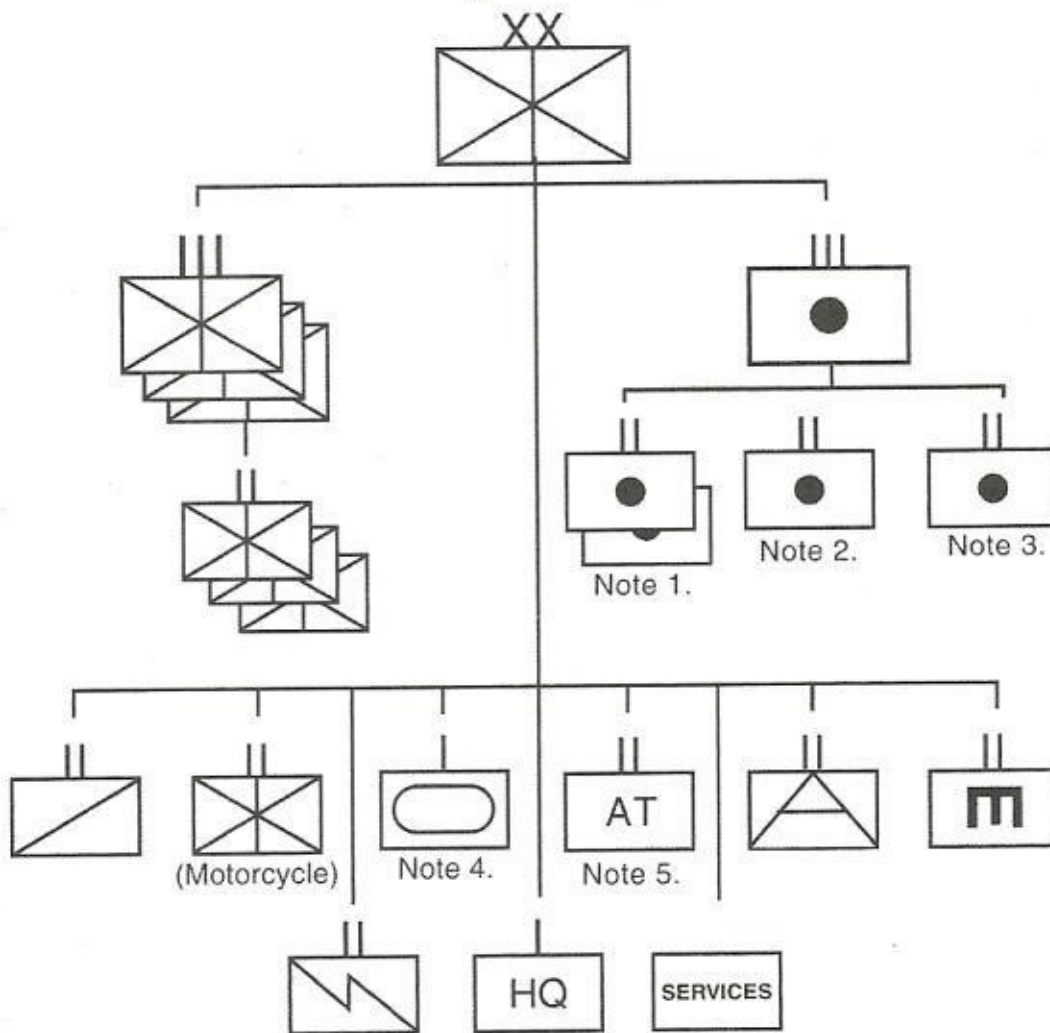
### **Waffen SS**

The *Waffen-SS*, as with the *Heer*, possessed a great variety of divisional

structures. The complexities of this variety were further complicated by a more or less continuous evolution of authorized division structures throughout the war. For example, the first *Waffen-SS* divisions were organized as motorized infantry ones, with little armor. Four of the earliest divisions (*SS-LAH*, *SS-Das Reich*, *SS-Totenkopf*, and *SS-Wiking*'] were then reformed as *Panzer* (armored)- divisions, and three new-armored divisions joined them (*SS-Hohenstaufen*, *SS-Frundsberg*, and *SS-Hitlerjugend*). Four additional divisions were raised as *Panzer-Grenadier* (armored infantry) (*SS-Nordland*, *SS-Reichsführer-SS*, *SSGotz von Berlichingen*, and *SS-Horst Wessel*).<sup>19</sup>



# Early War Waffen-SS Motorized Infantry Division



## Notes:

1. Each battalion consisted of three 4-gun batteries of towed 105mm howitzers.
2. Consisted of three 4-gun batteries of towed 150mm howitzers.
3. Consisted of two 4-gun batteries of 150mm howitzers and one 4-gun battery of 105mm field guns.
4. The assault gun battery was equipped with twelve assault guns.
5. The anti-tank battalion consisted of three 6-gun batteries of 75mm anti-tank guns.

The motorized SS-Combat Group *Nord* evolved into *SS-Nord*, which set the standard for the establishment of an SS mountain division. This was used as the intended structure for *SS-Prinz Eugen*, *SS-Handschar*, *SSSkanderbeg*, and *SS-Kama*, though the last two didn't complete formation. Similarly, the SS-Cavalry Brigade developed into *SS-Florian Geyer*, which had a structure copied for *SS-Maria Theresia* (though not for *SS-Liitzow*, which had a structure similar to an infantry division).

The SS infantry divisions, in particular the 14th, 15th, 19th, and 20th *Waffen-Grenadier* Divisions and the 31st *SS-Volunteer Grenadier* Division, used a standard *Heer* infantry division structure, first found in the 1940 version of *SS-Polizei* (which by the spring of 1944 had reformed into a *Panzer-Grenadier* division of the same structure as *SS-*

*Nordland*). This was also the intended model for the 25th and 26th *Waffen*Grenadier Divisions, the 27th, 28th, and 32d *SS*Volunteer Grenadier Divisions, and the 35th *SS-Polizei-Grenadier* Division, none of which completed their formation, though they did take the field in a semblance of what was intended.

The remaining divisions of the *Waffen-SS* were essentially enlarged brigades or combat groups, and had unique structures, especially as they often fought in several separate parts. This sounds like, and is, a complex subject. The following represents the idealized structure of *Waffen-SS* early war motorized, Panzer, Panzer-Grenadier, mountain, cavalry, and infantry divisions. Each division usually differed slightly in one way or another, and the divisional list in this book is the best way to trace each individual *Waffen-SS* division. Only the major combat elements are included; the supply regiment, for example, is not listed in detail. Units that are not described as “motorized” or “armored” can be assumed to be horse-drawn or dismounted, as appropriate.

In 1940-41, the few *Waffen-SS* divisions that existed were organized as motorized infantry divisions. These divisions consisted of the following subunits.

Three motorized infantry regiments, each of three infantry battalions. These regiments also had separate companies of combat engineers, antitank guns, heavy infantry guns (short-range howitzers), and motorcycle reconnaissance.

One motorized artillery regiment of four battalions, with two light howitzer battalions, one heavy howitzer battalion, and one mixed howitzer and field gun battalion.

One motorized reconnaissance battalion, including one company of armored cars, three of motorized infantry, and one of heavy weapons. One motorcycle infantry battalion.

One motorized anti-tank battalion with three batteries of towed antitank guns.

One motorized anti-aircraft battalion, with three batteries of 88mm pieces, two batteries of 37mm, and one battery of 20mm.

One motorized combat engineer battalion.

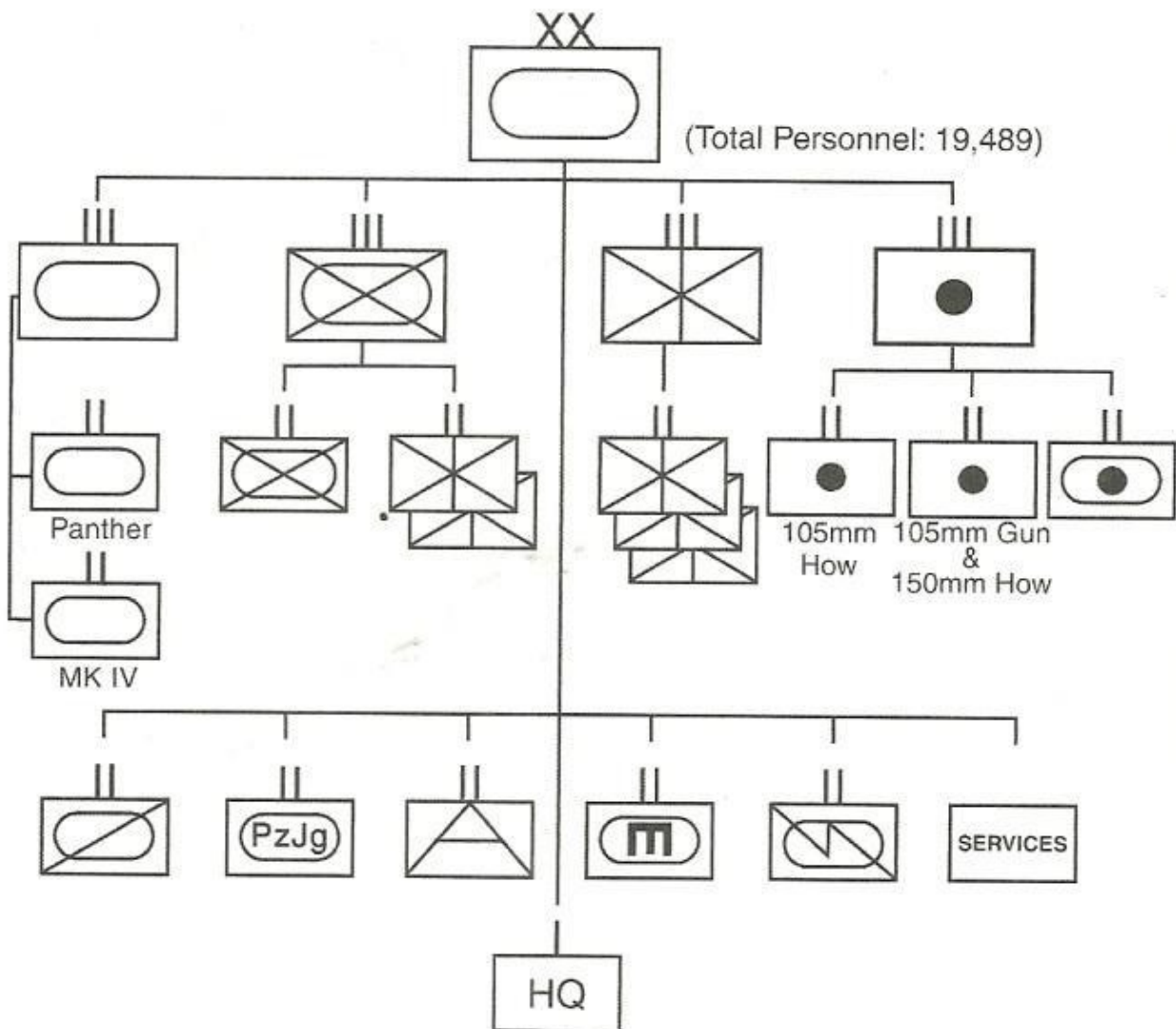
One motorized signal battalion.

One battery of assault guns.

## **Panzer Divisions**

Panzer divisions had two infantry regiments, one motorized and one armored. Each regiment had three battalions, and one of the three battalions in the armored infantry regiment was mounted aboard armored halftracks.

# Waffen-SS Panzer Division



## Notes:

1. The quantity of tanks authorized in an SS Panzer regiment varied according to changing tables of organization and equipment during the war. In the last year of the war, a battalion was authorized four companies, each of 17 tanks, with an additional 8 tanks in each battalion headquarters company for a total of 76 tanks per battalion. Another 8 in the regimental headquarters company brought the total to 160 tanks authorized for the regiment.
2. At the same time, the tank companies of the *SS-LAH* and *SS-Hitlerjugend* were authorized an additional platoon of five tanks each, bringing their totals to 96 tanks per battalion, and 200 tanks in the regiment.
3. The artillery regiment was authorized a battalion of 12 *Wespe* and 6 *Hummel* self-propelled howitzers, a battalion of 18 towed 105mm howitzers, and a battalion with two batteries of towed 150mm howitzers and one of towed 105mm field guns. Late in the war, *SS-LAH* and *SS-Hitlerjugend* were each authorized a battalion of *Nebelwerfers* as well.
4. The *Panzerjäger* (antitank) battalion consisted of two companies with 14 *Jagdpanzer* IVs each and battery of towed antitank guns.
5. The anti-aircraft battalion consisted of 20mm, 37mm, and 88mm guns.
6. Total armored personnel carriers for the division was 230.

All five remaining infantry battalions were motorized. Each regiment had separate companies of combat engineers, heavy infantry guns, light antiaircraft guns, and motorcycle reconnaissance. The heavy infantry guns in the armored regiment were self-propelled.

One regiment of tanks, with one battalion of Panzer IVs and one battalion of Panzer V “Panthers.” Each battalion had four companies of tanks, each with four platoons (although later in the war, the tank companies of *SSLAH* and *SS-Hitlerjugend* were authorized five platoons). The regiment included separate companies of motorized combat, engineers and armored anti-aircraft guns.

One regiment of artillery, with one light howitzer battalion, one heavy howitzer battalion, one mixed battalion with light cannon and multi-barrel rocket launchers, and one armored battalion with two batteries of *Wespe* (self-propelled 105mm howitzers) and one battery of *Hummel* (self-propelled 150mm howitzers).

One armored reconnaissance battalion, with one company of armored cars, three infantry companies mounted on armored halftracks, and one heavy weapons company mounted on armored halftracks.

One armored anti-tank battalion, with two batteries of *Jagdpanzer* TV tank destroyers and one motorized battery of anti-tank guns.

One motorized anti-aircraft battalion, with three batteries of 88mm guns, two batteries of 37mm automatic cannon, and one battery of 20mm automatic cannon.

One armored combat engineer battalion, with two motorized companies, one motorized heavy weapons company, and one company mounted on armored halftracks.

One armored signal battalion, with one field telephone company and one radio company, both with a mix of armored halftracks and unarmored vehicles.

## **Grenadier Divisions**

Two motorized infantry regiments, each of three infantry battalions, with separate companies of combat engineers, heavy infantry guns, light antiaircraft guns, and motorcycle reconnaissance.

One motorized artillery regiment, with two battalions of light howitzers and one battalion of heavy howitzers.

One battalion of tanks, equipped with assault guns, but organized in a tank manner with four companies, each with four platoons.

One battalion of anti-tank guns, equipped with assault guns in all three batteries.

One armored reconnaissance battalion, with two motorized infantry companies, two infantry companies mounted on armored halftracks, and one heavy weapons company mounted on armored halftracks.

One motorized anti-aircraft battalion with three batteries of 88mm pieces and one battery of 37mm pieces.

One motorized combat engineer battalion with companies.

One motorized signal battalion with one field telephone and one radio company.

## **Army Group South Operation Barbarossa**

As early as 1925, Hitler suggested in *Mein Kampf* that he would invade the

Soviet Union, asserting that the German people needed *Lebensraum* (“living space”, i.e., land and raw materials) and that these should be sought in the East. Nazism viewed the



Soviet Union (and all of Eastern Europe) as populated by “*Untermensch*” Slavs, ruled by “Jewish Bolshevik” masters. *Mein Kampf* said Germany’s destiny was to turn “to the East” as it did “six hundred years ago” and “the end of the Jewish domination in Russia will also be the end of Russia as a State.” Thereafter, Hitler spoke of an inescapable battle against “pan-Slav ideals”, in which victory would lead to “permanent mastery of the world”, although he also said they would “walk part of the road with the Russians, if that will help us”. Accordingly, it was stated Nazi policy to kill, deport, or enslave the majority of Russian and other Slavic populations and repopulate the land with Germanic peoples. Before World War II, observers believed that in a war with the Soviet Union, Germany would attack through the Baltic states while the *Kriegsmarine* would seize Leningrad from the sea. They assumed that possessing the entire Baltic basin would satisfy Hitler, who would not repeat Napoleon’s mistake of attacking Moscow. Some historians also believe that a decision to invade Russia was premeditated, based on Hitler being afraid of having to fight a war both against the allies in the west as well as against the Russians in the east. This preventative war would allow the Germans to avoid making the same mistake they had made in World War 1.

### **1939–1940 German-Soviet relationship**

The Soviet Union and Germany signed a non-aggression pact in August

1939, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, shortly before the German invasion of Poland that triggered World War II, which was followed by the Soviet invasion of that country. A secret protocol to the pact outlined an agreement between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union on the division of the border states between their respective “spheres of influence”. The Soviet Union and Germany would split Poland if an invasion were to occur, and Latvia, Estonia and Finland were defined as falling within the Soviet sphere of influence. The pact surprised the world because of the parties’ mutual hostility and their conflicting ideologies. As a result of the pact, Germany and the Soviet Union had reasonably strong diplomatic relations and an important economic relationship. The countries entered a trade pact in 1940, in which the Soviets received German military and industrial equipment in exchange for raw materials, such as oil or wheat, to help Germany circumvent a British blockade.

Despite the parties’ ongoing relations, each side was highly suspicious of the other’s intentions. After Germany entered the Axis Pact with Japan and Italy, it began negotiations about a potential Soviet entry into the pact. After two days of negotiations in Berlin from 12–14 November, Germany presented a proposed written agreement for a Soviet entry into the Axis.



## Map Operation Barbarossa

The Soviet Union offered a written counterproposal agreement on 25 November 1940, to which Germany did not respond. As both sides began colliding with each other in Eastern Europe, conflict appeared more likely, although they signed a border and commercial agreement addressing several open issues in January 1941. Historians also believe that Stalin, despite providing an amicable front to Hitler, did not wish to remain allies with Germany. Rather, Stalin might have had intentions to break off from Germany and proceed with his own campaign against Germany as well as the rest of Europe.



## Map Operation Barbarossa Army Groups Objectives

### Germany plans the invasion

Joseph Stalin's own reputation as a brutal dictator contributed both to the

Nazis' justification of their assault and their faith in success. In the late 1930s, many competent and experienced military officers were killed in the Great Purge, leaving the Red Army with a relatively inexperienced leadership compared to that of their German counterparts. The Nazis often emphasized the Soviet regime's brutality when targeting the Slavs with propaganda. German propaganda claimed the Red Army was preparing to attack them, and their own invasion was thus presented as a preemptive strike. In the summer of 1940, when German raw materials crises and a potential collision with the Soviet Union over territory in the Balkans arose, an eventual invasion of the Soviet Union looked increasingly like Hitler's only solution. While no concrete plans were yet made, Hitler told one of his generals in June that the victories in western Europe "finally freed his hands for his important real task: the showdown with Bolshevism".





### Map Operation Barbarossa Plan A

Although German generals told Hitler that occupying Western Russia would create “more of a drain than a relief for Germany’s economic situation,” the *Führer* anticipated additional benefits:

When the Soviet Union was defeated, the labor shortage in German industry could be relieved by demobilization of many soldiers. Ukraine would be a reliable source of agricultural products. Having the Soviet Union as a source of forced labor under German rule would vastly improve Germany’s geostrategic position.

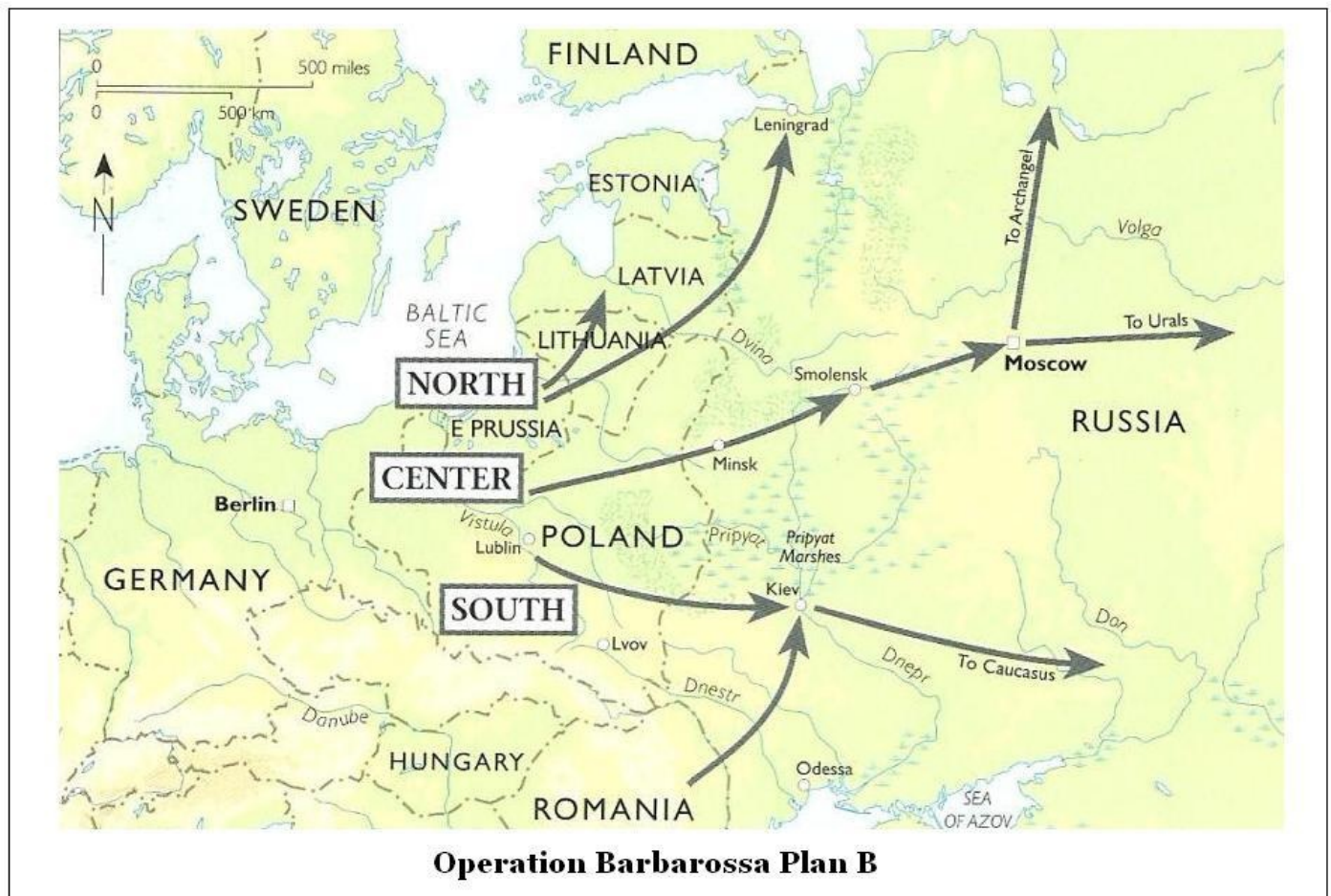
Defeat of the Soviet Union would further isolate the Allies, especially the United Kingdom.

The German economy needed more oil – controlling the Baku Oilfields would achieve this; as Albert Speer, the German Minister for Armaments and War Production, later said in his post-war interrogation, “the need for oil certainly was a prime motive” in the decision to invade.

On 5 December 1940, Hitler received the final military plans for the invasion which were drawn since July 1940 already under the codename Operation Otto. He approved them all, with the start scheduled for May 1941. On 18 December, Hitler signed War Directive No. 21 to the German High Command for an operation now codenamed “Operation Barbarossa” stating: “The German *Wehrmacht* must be prepared to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign.” The operation was named after Emperor Frederick Barbarossa of the

Holy Roman Empire, a leader of the Third Crusade in the 12th century. The invasion was set for 15 May 1941. The plan for *Barbarossa* assumed that the *Wehrmacht* would emerge victorious if it could destroy the bulk of the Red Army west of the Western Dvina and Dnieper Rivers. This assumption would be proven fatally wrong less than a month into the invasion.

In a 1978 essay “Das Russlandbild der führenden deutschen Militärs” Andreas Hillgruber made the case that the invasion plans drawn up by the German military elite were coloured by hubris stemming from the rapid defeat of France at the hands of the “invincible” *Wehrmacht* and by ignorance tempered by traditional German stereotypes of Russia as a primitive, backward “Asiatic” country - *a colossus with feet of clay*. Red Army soldiers were considered brave and tough, but the officer corps was held in contempt. The leadership of the *Wehrmacht* paid little attention to politics, the economy or culture and the considerable industrial capacity of the Soviet Union was ignored as a factor, in favour of a very narrow military view. As a result the *Wehrmacht* was ill-informed about the Soviet military and economic capacity. It was assumed that the Soviet Union was destined to be defeated, and that it would take Germany between six to eight weeks to destroy the Soviet Union.



### Map Operation Barbarossa Plan B

Hillgruber argued that because these assumptions were shared by the entire military elite Hitler was able to push through a “war of annihilation” that would be waged in the most inhumane fashion possible with the complicity of “several military leaders”, even though it was quite clear that this would be a violation of all accepted norms of warfare.

In the Soviet Union, speaking to his generals in December 1940, Stalin mentioned Hitler’s



references to an attack on the Soviet Union in *Mein Kampf*, and said they must always be ready to repulse a German attack, and that Hitler thought the Red Army would need four years to ready itself. Hence, “we must be ready much earlier” and “we will try to delay the war for another two years”.

In autumn 1940, high-ranking German officials drafted a memorandum on the dangers of an invasion of the Soviet Union. They said Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltic States would end up as only a further economic burden for Germany. Another German official argued that the Soviets in their current bureaucratic form were harmless, the occupation would not produce a gain for Germany and “why should it not stew next to us in its damp Bolshevism?”

Hitler disagreed with economists about the risks and told Hermann Göring, the chief of the *Luftwaffe*, that “everyone on all sides was always raising economic misgivings against a threatening war with Russia. From now on he was not going to listen to any more of that kind of talk or he was going to stop up his ears in order to get his peace of mind.” This was passed on to General Georg Thomas, who had been preparing reports on the negative economic consequences of an invasion of the Soviet Union— that it would be a net economic drain unless it was captured intact.



### Map Operation Barbarossa Plan C

Beginning in March 1941, Göring’s Green Folder laid out details of the So

viet Union’s proposed economic disposal after the invasion. The entire urban population of the invaded land was to be starved to death, thus creating an agricultural surplus to feed Germany and allowing the urban population’s replacement by a German upper class. In

the summer of 1941, German Nazi-ideologist Alfred Rosenberg suggested that conquered Soviet territory should be administered in the following *Reichskommissariate*:

Ostland (The Baltic countries and Belarus, extended eastward by about 500 km)

Ukraine (Ukraine, enlarged eastwards to the Volga)

Kaukasus (Southern Russia and the Caucasus region)

Moskowien (Moscow metropolitan area and the rest of European Russia)

Turkestan (Central Asian republics and territories)

Nazi policy aimed to destroy the Soviet Union as a political entity in accordance with the geopolitical *Lebensraum* ideal (“*Drang nach Osten*”) for the benefit of future generations of the “Nordic Aryan master race. Operation *Barbarossa* was to combine a northern assault towards Leningrad, a symbolic capturing of Moscow, and an economic strategy of seizing oil fields in the south beyond Ukraine. Hitler and his generals disagreed on which of these aspects should take priority and where Germany should focus its energies; deciding on priorities required a compromise. While planning *Barbarossa* in 1940–1941, in many discussions with his generals, Hitler repeated his order: “Leningrad first, the Donetsk Basin second, Moscow third”.

Hitler believed Moscow was of “no great importance” in the defeat of the Soviet Union, and instead believed victory would come with the destruction of the Red Army west of the capital. This later led to conflict between Hitler and several German senior officers including Heinz Guderian, Gerhard Engel, Fedor von Bock and Franz Halder, who believed the decisive victory could only be delivered at Moscow. Hitler was impatient to get on with his long-desired invasion of the east. He was convinced Britain would sue for peace, once the Germans triumphed in the Soviet Union, the real area of Germany’s interests. Halder noted in his diaries that, by destroying the Soviet Union, Germany would destroy Britain’s hope of victory. Hitler had grown overconfident from his rapid success in Western Europe and the Red Army’s ineptitude in the Winter War against Finland in 1939–1940. He expected victory within a few months and therefore did not prepare for a war lasting into the winter. This meant his troops lacked adequate warm clothing and preparations for a longer campaign when they began their attack. The assumption that the Soviet Union would quickly capitulate would prove to be his undoing.

### **German preparations**

The Germans had begun massing troops near the Soviet border even before

the campaign in the Balkans had finished. By the third week in February 1941, 680,000 German soldiers were stationed on the Romanian-Soviet border. In preparation for the attack, Hitler moved 3.2 million German and about 500,000 Axis soldiers to the Soviet border, launched many aerial surveillance missions over Soviet territory, and stockpiled materiel in the East. The Soviets were still taken by surprise, mostly due to Stalin’s belief that the Third Reich was unlikely to attack only two years after signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Soviet leader also believed the Nazis would be likely to finish their war with Britain before opening a new front. He refused to believe repeated warnings from his intelligence services on the Nazi buildup, fearing the reports to be British misinformation designed to spark a war between Germany and the USSR.

Spy Dr. Richard Sorge gave Stalin the exact German launch date; Swedish cryptanalysts led by Arne Beurling also knew the date beforehand, but Sorge and other informers (e.g.,

from the Berlin Police department) had previously given different invasion dates which passed peacefully before the actual invasion. In addition, British intelligence gathering information through Ultra warned the Soviet Union of impending invasion several months prior to 22 June 1941.

The Germans set up deception operations, from April 1941, to add substance to their claims that Britain was the real target: Operations *Haifisch* and *Harpune*. These simulated preparations in Norway, the Channel coast and Britain. There were supporting activities such as ship concentrations, reconnaissance flights and training exercises. Some details of these bogus invasion plans were deliberately leaked.

German military planners also researched Napoleon's failed invasion of Russia. In their calculations they concluded that there was little danger of a large-scale retreat of the Soviet army into the Russian interior, as it could not afford to give up the Baltic states, Ukraine, or the Moscow and Leningrad regions, all of which were vital to the Red Army for supply reasons and would thus have to be defended.

The strategy Hitler and his generals agreed on involved three separate army groups assigned to capture specific regions and cities of the Soviet Union. The main German thrusts were conducted along historical invasion routes. Army Group North was to march through the Baltics into northern Russia, and either take or destroy the city of Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg). Army Group Center would advance to Smolensk and then Moscow, marching through what is now Belarus and the west-central regions of Russia proper. Army Group South was to strike the heavily populated and agricultural heartland of Ukraine, taking Kiev before continuing eastward over the steppes of the southern USSR to the Volga with the aim of controlling the oil-rich Caucasus.

The postponement of *Barbarossa* from the initially planned date of 15 May to the actual invasion date of 22 June 1941 (a 38-day delay) occurred due to a combination of reasons; the Balkans Campaign required a diversion of troops and resources; insufficient logistics (preexisting and those incurred by the Balkans Campaign) hampered the preparations; and an unusually wet winter that kept rivers at full flood until late spring could have discouraged an earlier attack, even if it was unlikely to have happened before the end of the Balkans Campaign. The importance of the delay is still debated. The Germans also decided to bring rear forces (mostly *Waffen-SS* units and *Einsatzgruppen*)<sup>20</sup> into the conquered territories to counter any partisan activity in areas they controlled.

### **Soviet preparations**

Despite the estimations held by Hitler and others in the German high command, the Soviet Union was by no means weak. Rapid industrialization in the 1930s had led to industrial output second only to that of the United States, and equal to Germany. Production of military equipment grew steadily, and in the pre-war years the economy became progressively more oriented toward military production. Mikhail Tukhachevsky, one of the prominent military theorists in tank warfare in the interwar period, lobbied the Kremlin for colossal investment in the resources required for the production of weapons in mass quantities. In 1930 he forwarded a memo to the Kremlin, pressing the case for "40,000 aircraft and 50,000 tanks". In the early 1930s, a very modern operational doctrine for the Red Army was developed and promulgated in the 1936 field regulations, in the form of the Deep Battle concept. Defense expenditure also grew rapidly: by 1933 it had reached 12 percent of gross national product, from 5.2 percent in 1913; and by 1940 it stood at 18 percent.

On 5 May 1941, Stalin gave a speech to graduates of military academies in Moscow declaring: “War with Germany is inevitable. If comrade Molotov can manage to postpone the war for two or three years that will be our good fortune, but you yourselves must go off and take measures to raise the combat readiness of our forces”.

*We have only to kick in the door and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down.*  
—Adolf Hitler

*When Barbarossa commences, the world will hold its breath and make no comment.* —  
Adolf Hitler

According to Taylor and Proektor (1974), the Soviet armed forces in the western districts were outnumbered, with 2.6 million Soviet soldiers versus 3.9 million for the Axis. However, Glantz reports about 3.8 million as the total force of the Axis in June 1941, with 900,000 of them deployed in the West. The overall size of the Soviet armed forces in early July 1941, amounted to a little more than five million men, 2.6 million in the west, 1.8 million in the Far East, with the rest being deployed or training elsewhere. These figures, however, can be misleading. The figure for Soviet strength in the western districts of the Soviet Union counts only the First Strategic Echelon, which was stationed on and behind the Soviet western frontier to a depth of 400 kilometers; it also underestimates the size of the First Strategic Echelon, which was actually 2.9 million strong. The figure does not include the smaller Second Strategic Echelon, which as of 22 June 1941 was in the process of moving toward the frontier; according to the Soviet strategic plan; it was scheduled to be in position reinforcing the First Strategic Echelon by early July. The total Axis strength is also exaggerated; 3.3 million German troops were earmarked for participation in *Barbarossa*, but that figure includes reserves which did not take part in the initial assault. A further 600,000 troops provided by Germany’s allies also participated, but mostly after the initial offensive.

On 22 June, the German *Wehrmacht* achieved a local superiority in its initial assault (98 German divisions), including 29 armoured and motorized divisions, some 90 percent of its mobile forces, attacking on a front of 1,200 km (750 mi) between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian Mountains, against NKVD border troops and the divisions of the Soviet First Operational Echelon (the part of the First Strategic Echelon stationed immediately behind the frontier in the three western Special Military Districts) because it had completed its deployment and was ready to attack about two weeks before the Red Army was scheduled to have finished its own deployment with the Second Strategic Echelon in place. At the time, 41 percent of stationary Soviet bases were located in the near-boundary districts, many of them in the 200 km (120 mi) strip around the border; according to a Red Army directive, fuel, equipment, railroad cars, etc. were similarly concentrated there.

Moreover, on mobilization, as the war went on, the Red Army gained steadily in strength. While the strength of both sides varied, in general the 1941 belligerents fought with a slight Axis numerical superiority in manpower at the front. According to Mikhail Meltyukhov (2000:477), by the start of war, the Red Army numbered a total of 5,774,211 troops: 4,605,321 in ground forces, 475,656 in the air force, 353,752 in the navy, 167,582 as border guards and 171,900 in internal troops of the NKVD.

<b>Development of the armed forces of the Soviet Union from 1939 to 1941</b>	<b>1 January 1939</b>	<b>22 June 1941</b>	<b>% increase</b>
Divisions calculated	131.5	316.5	140.7
Personnel	2,485,000	5,774,000	132.4
Guns and mortars	55,800	117,600	110.7
Tanks	21,100	25,700	21.8
Aircraft	7,700	18,700	142.8

In some key weapons-systems, however, the Soviets had a considerable numerical advantage. In tanks, for example, the Red Army dominated overwhelmingly in numbers. They possessed 23,106, of which about 12,782 were in the five Western Military Districts (three of which directly faced the German invasion front). Adolf Hitler later said “If I had known about the Russian tank’s strength in 1941 I would not have attacked”. However, maintenance and readiness standards were very poor; ammunition and radios were in short supply, and many units lacked the trucks needed to carry supplies.

Also, from 1938, the Soviets had partly dispersed their tanks to infantry divisions for infantry support, but after their experiences in the Winter War and their observation of the German campaign against France, they had begun to emulate the Germans and organize most of their armored assets into large armored divisions and corps. This reorganization was only partially implemented at the dawn of Barbarossa, as not enough tanks were available to bring the mechanized corps up to organic strength. The German *Wehrmacht* had about 5,200 tanks overall, of which 3,350 were committed to the invasion. This yields a balance of immediately available tanks of about 4:1 in the Red Army’s favor. However, the most advanced Soviet tank models, the T-34 and KV-1, were not available in large numbers early in the war, and only accounted for 7.2 percent of the total Soviet tank-force. The Soviet numerical advantage in heavy equipment was also more than offset by the greatly superior training and readiness of German forces. The Soviet officer corps and high command had been massacred in Stalin’s Great Purge (1936–1938). Out of 90 generals arrested, only six survived the purges, as did only 36 out of 180 divisional commanders, and just seven out of 57 army corps commanders. In total, some 30,000 Red Army personnel were executed, while more were deported to Siberia and replaced with officers deemed more “politically reliable”. Three out of the five prewar marshals and about two-thirds of the corps and division commanders were shot. This often left younger, less experienced officers in their places. For example, in 1941, 75 percent of Red Army officers had held their posts for less than one year. The average Soviet *corps* commander was 12 years younger than the average German *division* commander. These officers tended to be very reluctant to take the initiative and often lacked the training necessary for their jobs.

The number of aircraft was also heavily in the Soviets’ favor. However, Soviet aircraft were largely obsolete, and Soviet artillery lacked modern firecontrol techniques. Most Soviet units were on a peacetime footing, which might explain why aviation units had their aircraft parked in closely bunched neat rows, rather than dispersed, making easy targets for the *Luftwaffe* in the first days of the conflict. Prior to the invasion the VVS (*Voennno-Vozdushnye Sily*; Soviet Air Force) was forbidden to shoot down *Luftwaffe* reconnaissance aircraft, despite hundreds of prewar incursions into Soviet airspace.



A shortage of modern aircraft severely hampered the Soviet war effort in the first phase of the Eastern-front war. The Soviet fighter force was equipped with large numbers of obsolete aircraft, such as the Polikarpov I15 biplane and the Polikarpov I-16. In 1941 the MiG-3, LaGG-3 and Yak-1 had just started to roll off the production lines, but were far inferior in allround performance to the Messerschmitt Bf 109 or later, to the Fw 190 when it entered operations in September 1941. Few aircraft had radios and those that were available were unencrypted and did not work reliably. The poor performance of the VVS during the Winter War with Finland had increased the Luftwaffe's confidence that the Soviets could be mastered. The standard of flight training had been accelerated in preparation for a German attack that was expected to come in 1942 or later. However Soviet pilot training was extremely poor. Order No 0362 of the People's Commissar of Defense, dated 22 December 1940, ordered flight training to be accelerated and shortened. Incredibly, while the Soviets had 201 MiG-3s and 37 MiG-1s combat-ready on 22 June 1941, only four pilots had been trained to handle these machines.

The Red Army was dispersed and unprepared, and units were often separated and without transportation to concentrate prior to combat. Although it had numerous, well-designed artillery pieces, some of the guns had no ammunition. Artillery units often lacked transportation to move their guns. Tank units were rarely well equipped, and also lacked training and logistical support. Maintenance standards were very poor. Units were sent into combat with no arrangements for refueling, ammunition resupply, or personnel replacement. Often, after a single engagement, units were destroyed or rendered ineffective. The army was in the midst of reorganizing their armor units into large tank corps, adding to the disorganization. As a result, although on paper the Red Army in 1941 seemed at least the equal of the German army, the reality in the field was far different; incompetent officers, as well as partial lack of equipment, insufficient motorized logistical support, and poor training placed the Red Army at a severe disadvantage.

In August 1940 British intelligence had received hints of German plans to attack the Soviets only a week after Hitler informally approved the plans for *Barbarossa*. Stalin's distrust of the British led to his ignoring their warnings, believing it to be a trick designed to bring the Soviet Union into the war. In the spring of 1941, Stalin's own intelligence services and American intelligence gave regular and repeated warnings of an impending German attack. However, Stalin chose to ignore them. Although acknowledging the possibility of an attack in general and making significant preparations, he decided not to run the risk of provoking Hitler. He also had an illfounded confidence in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which the USSR and Germany had signed just two years before. He also suspected the British of trying to spread false rumours in order to trigger a war between Germany and the USSR. Consequently, the Soviet border troops were not put on full alert and were sometimes even forbidden to fire back without permission when attacked—though a partial alert was implemented on 10 April—they were simply not ready when the German attack came.

Enormous Soviet forces had massed on the western border of the Soviet Union in case the Germans did attack. However, these forces were very vulnerable due to changes in the tactical doctrine of the Red Army. In 1938, it had adopted, on the instigation of General Dmitry Pavlov, a standard linear-defense tactic in line with other nations. Infantry divisions, reinforced by an organic tank component, would dig in to form heavily fortified zones. Then came the shock of the Fall of France. The Wehrmacht defeated the French

Army in a mere six weeks. Soviet analysis of events, based on incomplete information, concluded that French military collapsed due to a reliance on linear defence and a lack of armored reserves.

The Soviets decided not to repeat these mistakes. Instead of digging-in for linear defense, the infantry divisions would henceforth concentrate in large formations. Most tanks would also be concentrated into 29 mechanized corps, each with over 1,031 of them. Should the Germans attack, their armored spearheads would be cut off and wiped out by the mechanized corps. These would then cooperate with the infantry armies to drive back the German infantry, vulnerable in its approach march. The Soviet left wing, in Ukraine, was to be enormously reinforced to be able to execute a strategic envelopment: after destroying German Army Group South, it would swing north through Poland in the back of Army Groups Center and North. With the complete annihilation of the encircled German Army thus made inevitable, a Red Army offensive into the rest of Europe would follow.

### **The Soviet offensive plans theory**

Immediately after the German invasion of the USSR, Adolf Hitler put forward a thesis that the Red Army made extensive preparations for an offensive war in Europe, thus justifying the German invasion as a pre-emptive strike. After the war some *Wehrmacht* leaders, like Wilhelm Keitel, promoted this view.

This thesis was reiterated in the 1980s based on the analysis of circumstantial evidence. Thus it has been found that Zhukov drew up a proposal (signed by Aleksandr Vasilevsky and Nikolai Fyodorovich Vatutin) suggesting secret mobilization and deploying Red Army troops on the western border, under the cover of training. This proposed operation aimed to cut Germany off from its allies, especially from Romania and its oilfields that Germany needed to conduct the war.

According to Viktor Suvorov, Stalin planned to use Germany as a proxy (the “icebreaker”) against the West. Stalin aimed to fuel Hitler’s aggressive plans against Europe, and only after the countries had fought each other— and exhausted themselves to some extent— would the USSR make their move. For this reason Stalin provided significant material and political support to Adolf Hitler, while at the same time preparing the Red Army to “liberate” the whole of Europe from Nazi occupation. Suvorov saw *Barbarossa* as a German pre-emptive strike that capitalized on the Soviet troop concentrations immediately on the 1941 borders. Some others who support the idea that Stalin prepared to attack, like Mikhail Meltyukhov, reject this part of Suvorov’s theory, arguing that both sides prepared for an attack on their own, not in response to the other side’s preparations.

Although this thesis has drawn the attention of the general public in some countries (Germany, Russia and Israel), and has been supported by some historians (examples include Vladimir Nevezhin, Boris Sokolov, Valeri Danilov, Joachim Hoffmann, and Mark Solonin), the idea that Stalin was preparing an attack in 1941 has not been accepted by many western historians.

### **Order of battle**

#### **Composition of the Axis forces**

Franz Halder as the Chief of General Staff OKH, concentrated the following *Wehrmacht* and Luftwaffe forces for the operation:

#### **Army Group North**

(*Heeresgruppe Nord*) (*Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb*)

staged in East Prussia with (29 divisions):

16th Army ( *16. Armee*) (*Ernst Busch*)

4th Panzer Group (*Panzergruppe 4*) (*Erich Hoepner*)

18th Army (*18. Armee*) (*Georg von Küchler*)

Air Fleet 1 (*Luftflotte eins*) (*Alfred Keller*)

### **Army Group Center**

(*Heeresgruppe Mitte*) (*Fedor von Bock*)

staged in Eastern Poland with (50 divisions):

4th Army (*4. Armee*) (*Günther von Kluge*)

2nd Panzer Group (*Panzergruppe 2*) (*Heinz Guderian*)

3rd Panzer Group (*Panzergruppe 3*) (*Hermann Hoth*)

9th Army (*9. Armee*) (*Adolf Strauß*)

Air Fleet 2 (*Luftflotte zwei*) (*Albert Kesselring*)

**Army Group South** (*Heeresgruppe Süd*) (*Gerd von Rundstedt*) was staged in Southern Poland and Romania with (57 divisions):

17th Army (*17. Armee*) (*Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel*)

Slovak Expeditionary Force (*Ferdinand Čatloš*)

Royal Hungarian Army “Fast Moving Army Corps”( *Béla Miklós*) – Initially part of a larger “Carpathian Group” (*Karpat Gruppe*)

1st Panzer Group (*Panzergruppe 1*) (*Ewald von Kleist*)

11th Army (*11. Armee*) (*Eugen Ritter von Schobert*)

Italian Expeditionary Corps in Russia (*Corpo di Spedizione Italiano in Russia*, CSIR) (*Giovanni Messe*)

6th Army (*6. Armee*) (*Walther von Reichenau*)

Romanian 3rd Army (*Petre Dumitrescu*)

Romanian 4th Army (*Tancred Constantinescu*)

Air Fleet 4 (*Luftflotte vier*) (*Alexander Löhr*)

From **Occupied Norway** a smaller group of forces consisted of: Army High Command Norway

(*Armee-Oberkommando Norwegen*) (*Nikolaus von Falkenhorst*) with two Corps

Air Fleet 5 (*Luftflotte fünf*) (*Hans-Jürgen Stumpff*) (5 divisions)

From **Finland** (engaged in its Continuation War) (16 divisions): The Finnish Army of seven corps (Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim)

Numerous smaller units from all over Nazi-occupied Europe, like the “Legion of French Volunteers Against Bolshevism” (*Légion des Volontaires*

*Français contre le Bolchévisme*), supported the German war effort.

	Germany and allies	Soviet Union	Ratio
Divisions	183	190	1 : 1.1
Personnel	4,306,800	3,289,851	1.3 : 1
Guns and mortars	42,601	59,787	1 : 1.4
Tanks (incl assault guns)	4,171	15,687	1 : 3.8
Aircraft	4,389	11,537	1 : 2.6

### Composition of the Soviet Forces

At the beginning of the German Reich's invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 the Red Army areas of responsibility in the European USSR were divided into four active Fronts. More Fronts would be formed within the overall responsibility of the three Strategic Directions commands which corresponded approximately to a German Army (*Wehrmacht Heer*) Army Group (*Heeresgruppen*) in terms of geographic area of operations. In accordance with peacetime directives the Northern Front was formed from the Leningrad Military District, the North-Western Front from the Baltic Special Military District, the Western Front was formed from the Western Special Military District, and the Soviet Southwestern Front was formed from the Kiev Special Military District. The Southern Front was created on 25 June 1941 from the Odessa Military District. The first Directions were established on 10 July 1941, with Kliment Voroshilov commanding the North-Western Strategic Direction, Timoshenko commanding the Western Strategic Direction, and Budyonny commanding the South-Western Strategic Direction.

The forces of the North-Western Direction were:

The **Northern Front** (Colonel General Markian Popov) bordered Finland and included the 14th Army, 7th Army, 23rd Army and smaller units subordinate to the Front commander.

The **North-Western Front** (Colonel General Feodor Isodorovich Kuznetsov) defended the Baltic region and consisted of the 8th Army, 11th Army, and the 27th Army and other front troops (34 divisions). The Northern and Baltic Fleets

The forces of the Western Direction were:

The **Western Front** (General Dmitry Grigoryevitch Pavlov) had the 3rd Army, 4th Army, 10th Army and the Army Headquarters of the 13th Army which coordinated independent Front formations (45 divisions).

The forces of the South-Western Direction were:

The **South-Western Front** (Colonel General Mikhail Kirponos) was formed from the 5th Army, 6th Army, 12th Army and the 26th Army as well as a group of units under Strategic Direction command (45 divisions).

The **Southern Front** (General Ivan Tyulenev) was created on 25 June 1941 with the 9th Independent Army, the 18th Army, the 2nd and 18th Mechanized Corps (26 divisions). The Black Sea Fleet

Beside the Armies in the Fronts, there were a further six armies in the Western region of

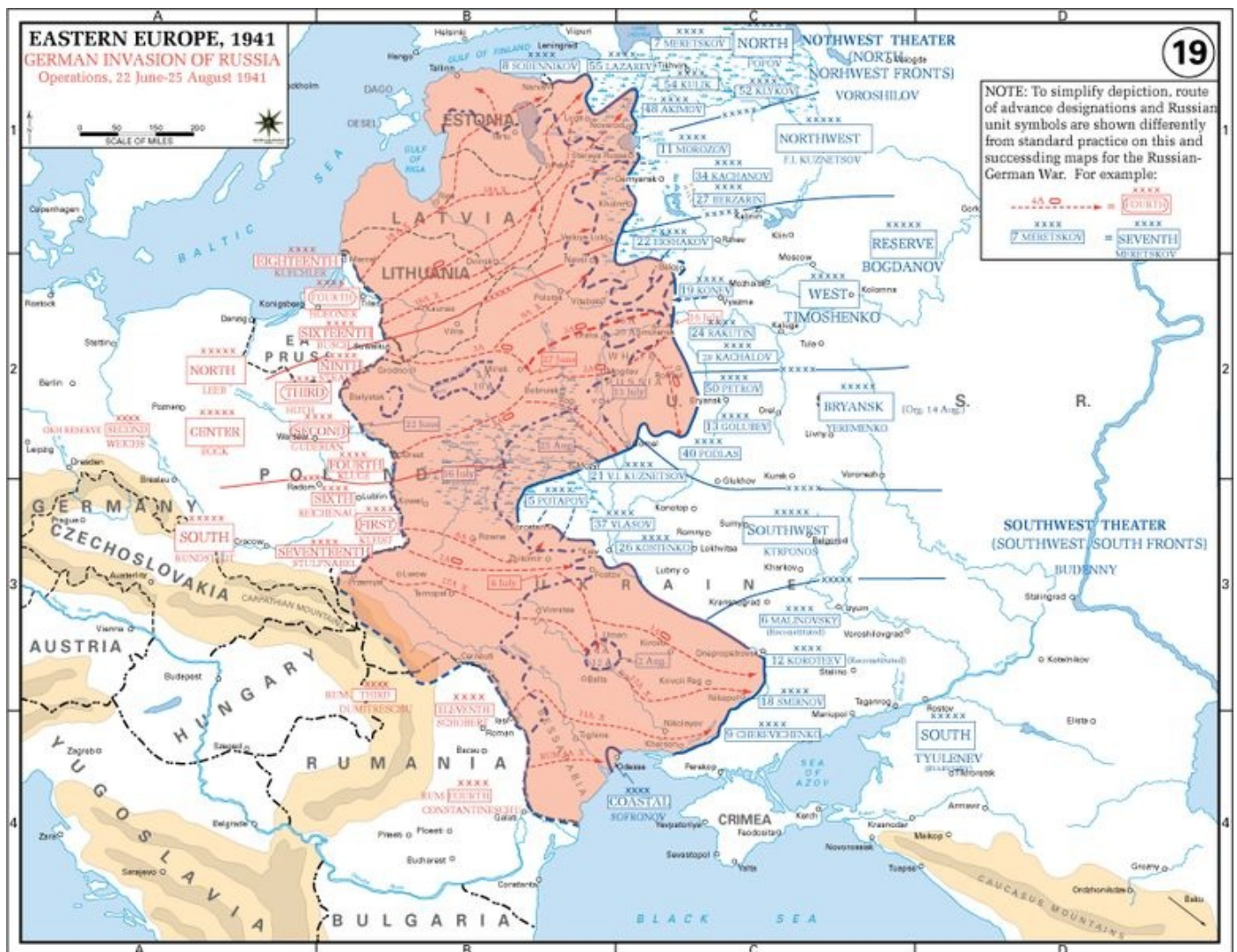
the USSR: the 16th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd and the 24th Armies that formed, together with independent units, the Stavka<sup>21</sup> Reserve Group of Armies, later renamed the Reserve Front – nominally under Stalin's direct command.

### **The invasion**

At 3:15 a.m. on Sunday, 22 June 1941, the Axis bombed major cities in Soviet-occupied Poland, two hours after the start codeword "Wotan" was issued. It is hard to pinpoint the opposing sides' strength in this initial phase, as most German figures include reserves allocated to the East but not yet committed, as well as several other comparability issues between the German and USSR's figures. Roughly three million *Wehrmacht* troops went into action on 22 June, and they faced slightly fewer Soviet troops in the border Military Districts. The contribution of the German allies would generally not make itself felt until later. The surprise was complete: though the *Stavka*, alarmed by reports that *Wehrmacht* units were approaching the border, had, at 00:30, ordered that the border troops be warned that war was imminent, only a small number of units were alerted in time. At around noon 22 June 1941, the news of the invasion was broadcast to the population by Molotov, as follows:

Citizens and Citizenesses of the Soviet Union! Today, at four o'clock in the morning, without addressing any grievances to the Soviet Union, without declaration of war, German forces fell on our country, attacked our frontiers in many places and bombed our cities...an act of treachery unprecedented in the history of civilized nations...The Red Army and the whole nation will wage a victorious Patriotic War for our beloved country, for honour, for liberty...Our cause is just. The enemy will be beaten. Victory will be ours.





### Map The frontier battles (22 June–3 July 1941)

By calling upon the population's devotion to their nation rather than the Party, Molotov struck a patriotic chord while allowing a stunned people to absorb the shattering news. The invasion did not come as a surprise to Stalin but he was completely astounded. It was not until 3 July before Stalin addressed the nation for the first time since the start of the German invasion, and just like Molotov's announcement of the war on 22 June, he called for a "patriotic war...of the entire Soviet people".

In Germany, on the morning of 22 June, Joseph Goebbels announced the invasion to the waking nation in a radio broadcast:

At this moment a march is taking place that, for its extent, compares with the greatest the world has ever seen. I have decided today to place the fate and future of the Reich and our people in the hands of our soldiers. May God aid us, especially in this fight.

Later the same morning, Hitler proclaimed to colleagues, “before three months have passed, we shall witness a collapse of Russia, the like of which has never been seen in history”.

Aside from the roughly 3.2 million German ground troops engaged in, or earmarked for, the Eastern Campaign, about 500,000 Romanian, Hungarian, Slovakian, Croatian, and Italian troops accompanied the German forces, while the Army of Finland made a major contribution in the north. The 250th Spanish “Blue” Infantry Division, was a formation of volunteered Spanish Falangists and Nazi sympathisers.

*Luftwaffe* reconnaissance units worked frantically to plot troop concentration, supply

dumps, and airfields, and mark them for destruction. The *Luftwaffe*'s task was to neutralize the Soviet Air Force. This was not achieved in the first days of operations, despite the Soviets having concentrated aircraft in huge groups on the permanent airfields rather than dispersing them on field landing strips, making them ideal targets. The *Luftwaffe* claimed to have destroyed 1,489 aircraft on the first day of operations. Hermann Göring—Chief of the *Luftwaffe*—distrusted the reports and ordered the figure checked. Picking through the wreckages of Soviet airfields, the *Luftwaffe*'s figures proved conservative, as over 2,000 destroyed Soviet aircraft were found. The *Luftwaffe* lost 35 aircraft on the first day of combat. The Germans claimed to have destroyed only 3,100 Soviet aircraft in the first three days. In fact Soviet losses were far higher; according to Russian historian Viktor Kulikov, some 3,922 Soviet aircraft had been lost. The *Luftwaffe* had achieved air superiority over all three sectors of the front, and would maintain it until the close of the year. The *Luftwaffe* could now devote large numbers of its *Geschwader* to support the ground forces.

### **Army Group South**

Opposite Army Group South were three Soviet armies, the 5th, 6th and 26th. Soviet commanders reacted quicker and the Germans faced determined resistance from the start. The German infantry armies struck at the junctions of these armies while the 1st Panzer Group drove its armored spearhead of 600 tanks right through the Soviet 6th Army, aiming to take Brody. On 26 June, five Soviet mechanized corps with over 4,000 tanks mounted a massive counterattack on the 1st Panzer Group. The battle was among the fiercest of the 1941 campaign and one of the largest tank battles in history, lasting over four days. In the end the poor Soviet logistics and coordination, combined with German tactical skill and air superiority enabled the Germans to prevail, although the Soviets inflicted heavy losses on the 1st Panzer Group.

With the Soviet counteroffensives' failure, the last substantial Soviet tank forces in Western Ukraine had been decimated, and the Red Army assumed a defensive posture, focusing on strategic withdrawal under severe pressure. The Soviet air arm, the VVS, lost 1,561 aircraft over Ukraine, with one tenth of its entire strength destroyed on the ground on the first day of the war. With their armored reserves all but destroyed, the Red Army in Ukraine could not conduct any mobile operations and were forced onto the defensive for the rest of the year.

However, Red Army commanders such as Mikhail Kirponos, Konstantin Rokossovsky and Andrey Vlasov were among some of the best generals in the Soviet Union (though Vlasov would eventually defect to Germany). Their tactical skill, as well as quick reaction to the invasion meant that the Soviet forces in Ukraine avoided the rapid destruction that befell other army groups in Belarus and the Baltic States. However without any armored support, and the *Luftwaffe* dominating the sky, all the Red Army could do was buy time. Eventually, the German 6th Army broke through the Stalin Line and 1st Panzer Group finally reached open country. von Kleist's Panzers linked up with von Reichenau's forces, trapping the remains of the Soviet 5th and 6th armies. The door to Kiev was now open.

### **Summary of the first phase**

By the end of the first week, all three German Army Groups had achieved major campaign objectives. However, in the vast pocket around Minsk and Białystok, the Soviets were still

fighting; reducing the pocket was causing high German casualties and many Red Army troops were escaping. The estimated casualties of the Red Army amount to 600,000 killed, wounded, missing or captured.

Franz Halder summarized the achievements made in the opening phase of the operation in his diary as follow: "The objective to shatter the bulk of the Russian Army this [western] side of the Dvina and Dnieper has been accomplished... It is thus probably no overstatement to say that the Russian Campaign has been won in the space of two weeks." However, cracks were already beginning to form in Hitler's plan. It became apparent to everyone that the OKH had grossly underestimated the size of Soviet reserves. Furthermore, the Wehrmacht's officer core consisted of the old German aristocracy, primarily Prussian Junkers. These officers were schooled in the 19th century style of Clausewitzian theory.

According to Clausewitz, wars were won by concentrating your armies at the enemy's focal point, their tactical Schwerpunkt. At the tactical level, this meant that your armies would win a battle by concentrating effort at unexpected locations, then having them converge upon the enemies focal point, leading to a Kesselschlacht, a cauldron battle. Now surrounded, the enemy would be forced to fight a Vernichtungsschlacht, a battle of annihilation where they would be destroyed. The Białystok–Minsk operation is a perfect example of this style of thinking. At the strategic level, this meant that your armies after winning their decisive battles would eventually converge on the enemies overall focal point. In the case of Operation Barbarossa, this was Moscow. Thus nearly every German commander treated Moscow as the ultimate prize.

However Hitler had a more modern, and according to David Glantz, correct view of modern warfare. Wars were not won by aristocrats drinking wine and smoking cigars over the negotiating table, dictating terms to their defeated gentleman rivals after winning some decisive engagement. Wars were won by making resistance impossible by starving them of industrial production, and denying them the raw materials needed to fight. In this thinking, Leningrad was of vital importance to keep the Baltic Fleet from interfering with deliveries of iron ore from Sweden. Furthermore, Crimea must be captured to prevent air raids on Romanian oil fields. Kharkov also must be captured to deny the enemy its deposits of coal and iron, as well as its heavy industry. Finally, Rostov-on-Don must be captured in order to deny access to the Black Sea as well as using it as eventual launching pad for an invasion of the Caucasus, rich in oil and minerals.

To this end, Hitler ordered 3rd Panzer Group north in order to assist Army Group North in the capture of Leningrad. The 11th Army was ordered south to capture Crimea. The 6th Army was ordered to seize Kharkov and the 1st Panzer Group was ordered to seize Rostov-on-Don with the 17th Army acting as the link between the other two. This meant that instead of the armies converging on some decisive objective, they were instead spreading themselves out leading to thinly defended sectors and dangerous gaps, areas ripe for counterattacks. To the German officer corps, Hitler's decisions were strategic madness.



### Map Battle of Smolensk (3 July – 5 August 1941)

On 3 July, Hitler finally gave the go-ahead for the Panzers to resume their

drive east after the infantry divisions had caught up. However, a rainstorm typical of Russian summers slowed their progress and Russian defenses stiffened. The delays gave the Soviets time to organize a massive counterattack against Army Group Center. Its ultimate objective was Smolensk, which commanded the road to Moscow. Facing the Germans was an old Soviet defensive line held by six armies. On 6 July, the Soviets attacked the 3rd Panzer Army with 700 tanks. The Germans defeated this counterattack with overwhelming air superiority. The 2nd Panzer Army crossed the River Dnieper and closed on Smolensk from the south while the 3rd Panzer Army, after defeating the Soviet counterattack, closed on Smolensk from the north. Trapped between their pincers were three Soviet armies. On 18 July, the Panzer Groups came to within sixteen kilometres of closing the gap but the trap would not snap shut until 26 July. When the Panzer Groups finally closed the gap, 300,000 Red Army soldiers were captured; but liquidating the pocket took another ten days in which time 100,000 Red Army soldiers escaped to stand between the Germans and Moscow. Four weeks into the campaign, the Germans realized they had grossly underestimated Soviet strength. The German troops had used their initial supplies without attaining the expected strategic freedom of movement. Operations were now slowed down to allow for resupply; the delay was to be used to adapt strategy to the new situation. Hitler had lost faith in encirclement as large numbers of Soviet soldiers had escaped the pincers. Hitler now believed he could defeat the Soviets by economic damage, depriving them of the industrial capacity to continue the war. That meant seizing the industrial center of Kharkov, the Donets Basin and the oil fields of the Caucasus in the south and the speedy capture of Leningrad, a major center of military production, in the north. He also wanted to link up with the Finns to the north.

Fedor von Bock and almost all the German generals involved in Operation *Barbarossa*, vehemently argued in favor of continuing the all-out drive toward Moscow. Besides the psychological importance of capturing the enemy's capital, the generals pointed out that Moscow was a major center of arms production and the center of the Soviet communications and transportation system. More importantly, intelligence reports indicated that the bulk of the Red Army was deployed near Moscow under Semyon



Timoshenko for an all-out defense of the capital. But Hitler was adamant, and issued a direct order to Heinz Guderian, bypassing his commanding officer von Bock, to send Army Group Centre's tanks to the north and south, temporarily halting the drive to Moscow.

By mid-July, below the Pinsk Marshes, the Germans had come within a few kilometers of Kiev. The 1st Panzer Army then went south while the German 17th Army struck east and trapped three Soviet armies near Uman. As the Germans eliminated the pocket, the tanks turned north and crossed the Dnieper. Meanwhile, the 2nd Panzer Army, diverted from Army Group Center, had crossed the River Desna with 2nd Army on its right flank. The two Panzer armies now trapped four Soviet armies and parts of two others.

For its final attack on Leningrad, the 4th Panzer Army was reinforced by tanks from Army Group Center. On 8 August, the Panzers broke through the Soviet defenses; the German 16th Army attacked to the northeast, the 18th Army and the Estonian guerilla Forest Brothers cleared the country and advanced to Lake Peipus. By the end of August, 4th Panzer Army had penetrated to within 30 mi (48 km) of Leningrad. The Finns had pushed southeast on both sides of Lake Ladoga, reaching the old Finnish-Soviet frontier.

At this stage, Hitler ordered the final destruction of Leningrad with no prisoners taken, and on 9 September, Army Group North began the final push which within ten days brought it within 7 mi (11 km) of the city. However, the advance over the last 10 km (6.2 mi) proved very slow and casualties mounted. At this stage, Hitler lost patience and ordered that Leningrad should not be stormed but starved into submission. Deprived of its Panzer forces, Army Group Center had remained static and was subjected to numerous Soviet counterattacks in particular the Yelnya Offensive in which the Germans suffered their first major tactical defeat since their invasion began. These attacks drew Hitler's attention back to Army Group Center and its drive on Moscow. The Germans ordered the 3rd and 4th Panzer Armies to break off their siege of Leningrad and support Army Group Center on its attack on Moscow.



**Map Battle for Moscow (2**

**October – 5 December 1941)**

Before it could begin, operations in Kiev needed to be finished. Half of Army Group Center had swung to the south in the back of the Kiev position, while Army Group South



moved to the north from its Dniepr bridgehead. The encirclement of Soviet Forces in Kiev was achieved on 16 September. A savage battle ensued in which the Soviets were hammered with tanks, artillery, and aerial bombardment. After ten days of vicious fighting, the Germans claimed over 600,000 Soviet soldiers captured. Actual losses were 452,720 men, 3,867 artillery pieces and mortars from 43 Divisions of the 5th, 21st, 26th, and 37th Soviet Armies.

After Kiev, the Red Army no longer outnumbered the Germans and there were no more directly available trained reserves. To defend Moscow, Stalin could field 800,000 men in 83 divisions, but no more than 25 divisions were fully effective. Operation Typhoon, the drive to Moscow, began on 2 October. In front of Army Group Center was a series of elaborate defense lines, the first centered on Vyazma and the second on Mozhaysk. The first blow took the Soviets completely by surprise as the 2nd Panzer Army, returning from the south, took Oryol which was 75 mi (121 km) south of the Soviet first main defense line. Three days later, the Panzers pushed on to Bryansk while 2nd Army attacked from the west. The Soviet 3rd and 13th Armies were now encircled. To the north, the 3rd and 4th Panzer Armies attacked Vyazma, trapping the 19th, 20th, 24th and 32nd Armies.

Moscow's first line of defense had been shattered. The pocket eventually yielded 673,000 Soviet prisoners, bringing the tally since the start of the invasion to three million. The Soviets had only 90,000 men and 150 tanks left for the defense of Moscow.

The Soviets had already survived beyond the few weeks that most experts expected after the Germans invaded; Walter Duranty was perhaps the only observer to predict that the USSR could survive for much longer. The German government now publicly predicted the imminent capture of Moscow, convincing foreign correspondents of a pending Soviet collapse. On 13 October, the 3rd Panzer Army penetrated to within 90 mi (140 km) of the capital. Martial law was declared in Moscow. Almost from the beginning of Operation *Typhoon*, however, the weather had deteriorated. Temperatures fell while there was a continued rainfall, turning the unpaved road network into mud and steadily slowing the German advance on Moscow to as little as 2 mi (3.2 km) a day. The supply situation rapidly deteriorated. On 31 October, the German Army High Command ordered a halt to Operation *Typhoon* while the armies were reorganized. The pause gave the Soviets, who were in a far better supply situation, time to consolidate their positions and organize formations of newly activated reservists. In little over a month the Soviets organized eleven new armies which included 30 divisions of Siberian troops. These had been freed from the Soviet far east as Soviet intelligence had assured Stalin there was no longer a threat from the Japanese. With the Siberian forces came over 1,000 tanks and 1,000 aircraft.

The Germans were nearing exhaustion, while they also began to recall Napoleon's invasion of Russia. General Günther Blumentritt noted in his diary: *They remembered what happened to Napoleon's Army. Most of them began to re-read Caulaincourt's grim account of 1812. That had a weighty influence at this critical time in 1941. I can still see Von Kluge trudging through the mud from his sleeping quarters to his office and standing before the map with Caulaincourt's book in his hand.* On 15 November, with the ground hardening due to the cold weather, the Germans once again began the attack on Moscow. Although the troops themselves were now able to advance again, there had been no delay allowed to improve the supply situation. Facing the Germans were the 5th, 16th, 30th, 43rd, 49th, and 50th Soviet armies. The Germans intended to let 3rd and 4th Panzer

Armies cross the Moscow Canal and envelop Moscow from the northeast. 2nd Panzer Army would attack Tula and then close in on Moscow from the south. As the Soviets reacted to the flanks, 4th Army would attack the center. In two weeks of desperate fighting, lacking sufficient fuel and ammunition, the Germans slowly crept towards Moscow. However, in the south, 2nd Panzer Army was being blocked. On 22 November, Soviet Siberian units augmented with the 49th and 50th Soviet Armies attacked the 2nd Panzer Army and inflicted a shocking defeat on the Germans. However, 4th Panzer Army pushed the Soviet 16th Army back and succeeded in crossing the Moscow canal and began the encirclement.

On 2 December, part of the 258th Infantry Division advanced to within 15 mi (24 km) of Moscow, and could see the spires of the Kremlin, but by then the first blizzards of the winter had begun. A Reconnaissance-Battalion also managed to reach the town of Khimki—only about 8 km (5.0 mi) away from the Soviet capital—and captured its bridge over the MoscowVolga Canal as well as its railway station, which marked the farthest advance of German forces. The *Wehrmacht* was not equipped for winter warfare. The bitter cold also caused severe problems for their guns and equipment; weather conditions grounded the *Luftwaffe*. Newly built-up Soviet units near Moscow now numbered over 500,000 men, and on 5 December, they launched a massive counterattack which pushed the Germans back over 200 mi (320 km). By December 1941, the invasion had cost the German Army over 210,000 killed and missing and 620,000 wounded in 1941, a third of whom became casualties after 1 October, and an unknown number of Axis casualties such as Hungarians, Romanians, and *Waffen* SS troops as well as co-belligerent Finns. This phase of the operation was cut short because of the Russian winter and resulted in the heaviest losses of the war on the German side.

### **Reasons for initial Soviet defeats**

The Red Army and air force were so badly defeated in 1941 mainly because they were ill-prepared for the Axis surprise attack. By 1941 the Germans were the most experienced and best-trained troops in the world for the rapid, *blitzkrieg*-style warfare that encompassed the Eastern Front during the second half of 1941.

The Axis had a doctrine of mobility, annihilation, excellent communications and confidence caused by repeated low-cost victories. The Soviet armed forces, by contrast, lacked leadership, training and readiness. The officer corps of the Red Army had been decimated by Stalin's Great Purge of 1936–1938, and their replacements, appointed by Stalin for political reasons, often lacked military competence, which was shown by the difficulty that the Soviet Union had in defeating Finland in the Russo-Finnish War of 1939–1940. Of the five marshals appointed in 1935, only two emerged from Stalin's purge with their lives; 50 out of the 57 corps commanders were killed, 154 out of the 186 divisional commanders and 401 out of 456 colonels; and many other officers were dismissed. Stalin further underscored his control by reasserting the role of political commissars at the divisional level and below to oversee and ensure the political correctness and loyalty of the army to the regime. The commissars held a position equal to that of the commander but with the authority to countermand his orders. Nonetheless, the impact of the purges must be seen in context of the military strength of the armed forces in 1937, which was far from actualizing the goals set by the military reforms that began in the early 1930s. By 1941 about 80 percent of the officers dismissed during the purge had

been reinstated. Also, between January 1939 and May 1941, 161 new divisions were activated. Therefore, although about 75 percent of all the officers had been in their position for less than one year by 1941, that was because of the rapid increase in creation of military units, and not just because of the purge. Hence, it was the combined effect of the purge and the rapid expansion of the army that led to its dilution.

In the interwar years following the end of World War I, much of the effort of the Red Army was put towards the development of offensive forces, concepts, doctrines, and techniques. Soviet brainpower and resources focused on the creation of elements critical to achieving strategic offensive success through the conduct of deep operations and deep battle. The Red Army's fixation on offensive combat meant little attention was given to defensive combat. For instance, the 1936 Field Regulations devoted only about 20 pages of the 300-page document to defence, in which it was described as a temporary phenomenon designed to economize force, gain time, hold critical areas, or disrupt an advancing enemy, pending a resumption of the allimportant offence. This general neglect for the need of defensive combat, combined with other problems, caused the disasters that befell the Red Army in the summer and fall of 1941.

Much Soviet planning assumed that in case of a German invasion, the main forces of each side would need up to two weeks to meet each other and Stalin forbade any ideas of a campaign deep inside Soviet territory. Thus the Axis attack came when new organizations and promising, but untested, weapons were just beginning to trickle into operational units. Much of the Soviet Army in Europe was concentrated along the new western border of the Soviet Union, in former Polish territory that lacked significant defenses, allowing many Soviet military units to be overrun and destroyed in the first weeks of war.

Initially, many Soviet units were also hampered by Semyon Timoshenko's and Georgy Zhukov's prewar orders (demanded by Joseph Stalin) not to engage or to respond to provocations (followed by a similarly damaging first reaction from Moscow, an order to stand and fight, then counterattack; this left those units vulnerable to encirclement) by a lack of experienced officers and by bureaucratic inertia.

Stalin's orders not to retreat or surrender led to static linear positions that German tanks easily breached, again quickly cutting supply lines and surrounding whole Soviet armies. Only later did Stalin allow his troops to retreat wherever possible and regroup, to mount a defense in depth, or to counterattack. More than 2.4 million Soviet troops had been captured by December 1941, by which time German and Soviet forces were fighting almost in the suburbs of Moscow. Until the end of the war, more than three million Soviet prisoners were to die from exposure, starvation, disease, or willful mistreatment by the Nazi regime.

In his memoirs, Zhukov summarized the predicament as follows: two or three years would have given the Soviet people a brilliant army, perhaps the best in the world... [but] history allotted us too small a period of peace to get everything organized as it should have been. We began many things correctly and there were many things we had no time to finish. Our miscalculation regarding the possible time of the fascist Germany's attack told greatly. Soviet tactical errors in the first few weeks of the offensive proved catastrophic. Initially, the Red Army was fooled by overestimation of its own capabilities. Instead of intercepting German armor, Soviet mechanised corps were ambushed and destroyed after *Luftwaffe* dive bombers inflicted heavy losses. Soviet tanks, poorly maintained and manned by inexperienced crews, suffered an appalling rate of breakdowns. Lack of spare parts and

trucks ensured a logistical collapse. The decision not to dig in the infantry divisions proved disastrous. Lacking tanks and sufficient motorization, Soviet troops could not wage mobile warfare against the Axis.

### **Causes of the failure of Operation *Barbarossa***

The gravity of the beleaguered German army's situation towards the end of 1941 was due to the Red Army's increasing strength and factors that in the short run severely restricted the German forces' effectiveness. Chief among these were their overstretched deployment, a serious transport crisis and the eroded strength of most divisions. The infantry deficit that appeared by 1 September 1941, was never made good. For the rest of the war in the Soviet Union, the *Wehrmacht* would be short of infantry and support services.

**Underestimation of the capacity of Soviet mobilization** The German High Command grossly underestimated the mobilization potential of the Red Army. From the onset of the campaign till the end of 1941, the Soviet Union raised 825 division-equivalents, tapping into its mobilization pool of over 10 million men. Between the onset of the war and the end of June alone 800,000 men were mobilized, and another 600,000 in July. The plan for *Barbarossa* assumed that the *Wehrmacht* would emerge victorious if it could destroy the bulk of the Red Army west of the Dvina and Dnieper rivers. By 3 July, Army Group Center had, in the Battle of Białystok–Minsk, destroyed three encircled Soviet Armies (3rd, 4th and 10th) in the vicinity of Minsk. As Army Group Center arrived at the river banks on 7 July, however, they discovered another five Soviet Armies (16th, 19th, 20th, 21st, and 22nd). By 10 July, it became clear that the assumptions regarding the result of destroying the Red Army forces west of the two rivers proved incorrect. Nonetheless, three of these Soviet Armies (16th, 19th, and 20th) were quickly encircled and eventually decimated in the vicinity of Smolensk, while the other two were severely weakened. In just the first six weeks of the invasion, which was between late June and early August, the Red Army had lost as many as 1.5 million soldiers (killed, wounded or captured). By 6 August another row of five Soviet Armies (24th, 28th, 29th, 30th, and Group Iartsevo) were facing Army Group Center, however, and unknown to German intelligence, still another row of Soviet Armies were forming to the rear (31st, 33rd, and 43rd). In comparison, according to Franz Halder the chief of the OKH General Staff, by 2 August Army Group Center had lost 74,500 men (killed, wounded, or missing) and had received only 23,000 replacements. By the end of August the Red Army losses rose to nearly three million (killed, wounded or captured), but that did not hinder it from raising more men for the defense of Moscow. The Soviets also quickly relocated their factories. According to one account by a German soldier, when German troops arrived at the Dnieper River they saw many intact industrial plants; by the time they crossed the river, however, the Russians had emptied every building and taken their contents east. By September it became clear that the mobilization capacity of the Red Army had been severely underestimated.

Franz Halder wrote in his diary in 1941:

The whole situation makes it increasingly plain that we have underestimated the Russian colossus...[Soviet] divisions are not armed and equipped according to our standards, and their tactical leadership is often poor. But there they are, and as we smash a dozen of them the Russians simply put up another dozen. The time factor favours them, as they are near their own resources, while we are moving farther and farther away from ours. And so our

troops, sprawled over the immense front line, without depth, are subject to the incessant attacks of the enemy.

The Red Army proved it could replace huge losses quickly, and was not destroyed as a coherent force. When divisions of conscripts trained before the war were destroyed, new formations replaced them. On average, about half a million men were drafted each month for the duration of the war. The Soviets also proved very skilled in raising and training many new armies from the different ethnic populations of the far flung republics. The ability to mobilize vast (if often poorly trained and equipped) forces rapidly and continually allowed the Soviet Union to survive the critical first six months of the war.

### **Faults of logistical planning**

At the start of the war in the dry summer, the Germans took the Soviets by surprise and destroyed a large part of the Red Army in the first weeks. When good weather gave way to the harsh autumn and winter and the Red Army recovered, the German offensive began to falter. The German army could not be supplied sufficiently for prolonged combat; indeed, there was not enough fuel for the whole army to reach its objectives.

This was well understood by the German supply units even before the operation, but their warnings were ignored. The entire German plan assumed that within six to eight weeks they would have attained full strategic freedom due to a complete collapse of the Red Army. Only then could they have diverted necessary logistic support to fuelling the few mobile units needed to occupy the defeated state.

German infantry and tanks stormed 300 mi (480 km) ahead in the first week, but their supply lines struggled to keep up. Soviet railroads could at first not be fully used due to a difference in track gauges (Germany used standard gauges while Russia used five-foot Russian gauge), and dismantled railroad facilities in border areas. In addition, road systems that looked impressive on the map, were in reality under-developed. Lack of supplies significantly slowed down the formerly highly effective German tactic of *blitzkrieg*.

### **Weather**

A paper published by the U.S. Army's Combat Studies Institute in 1981 concluded that Hitler's plans miscarried *before* the onset of severe winter weather. He was confident of a quick victory, so he did not prepare properly for a winter war in the Soviet Union.

Moreover, his eastern army suffered more than 734,000 casualties (about 23 percent of its average strength of 3,200,000 soldiers) in the first five months of the invasion, and on 27 November 1941, General Eduard Wagner, Quartermaster General of the German Army, reported "We are at the end of our resources in both personnel and material. We are about to be confronted with the dangers of deep winter."

The German forces were unready to deal with harsh weather and the poor road network of the USSR. In September, terrain slowed the *Wehrmacht's* progress. Few roads were paved. The ground in the USSR was very loose sand in summer, sticky muck in autumn, and heavy snow in winter. German tanks had narrow tracks with little traction and poor flotation in mud. In contrast, the new generation of Soviet tanks such as the T-34 and KV had wide tracks and were far more mobile in these conditions. The 600,000 large western European horses the Germans used for supply and artillery movement did not cope well with this weather. The smaller horses the Red Army used were much better adapted to the climate and could even scrape the icy ground with their hooves to dig up the weeds



beneath. German troops were mostly unprepared for the harsh weather changes in the rainy autumn and early winter of 1941. Equipment had been prepared for such winter conditions, but the severely overstrained transport network could not move it to the front. Consequently, the troops lacked adequate cold-weather gear, and some soldiers had to pack newspapers into their jackets as temperatures dropped to below  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$ . While at least some cold weather uniforms were available, they rarely reached the Eastern Front because Hitler ordered that supply lines give more priority to shipments of ammunition and fuel. To operate furnaces and heaters, the Germans also burned precious fuel that was in short supply. Soviet soldiers, in contrast, often had warm, quilted uniforms, felt-lined boots, and fur hats.

German weapons malfunctioned in the cold. Lubricating oils were unsuitable for these temperatures, leading to engine malfunction and misfires. To load shells into a tank's main gun, frozen grease had to be chipped off with a knife. Soviet units faced less severe problems due to their experience with cold weather. Aircraft had insulating blankets to keep their engines warm while parked. Lighter-weight oil was used. German tanks and armored vehicles could not move due to a lack of antifreeze, causing fuel to solidify. The cold was so intense that fires had to be lit under vehicles' engines before they could be started.

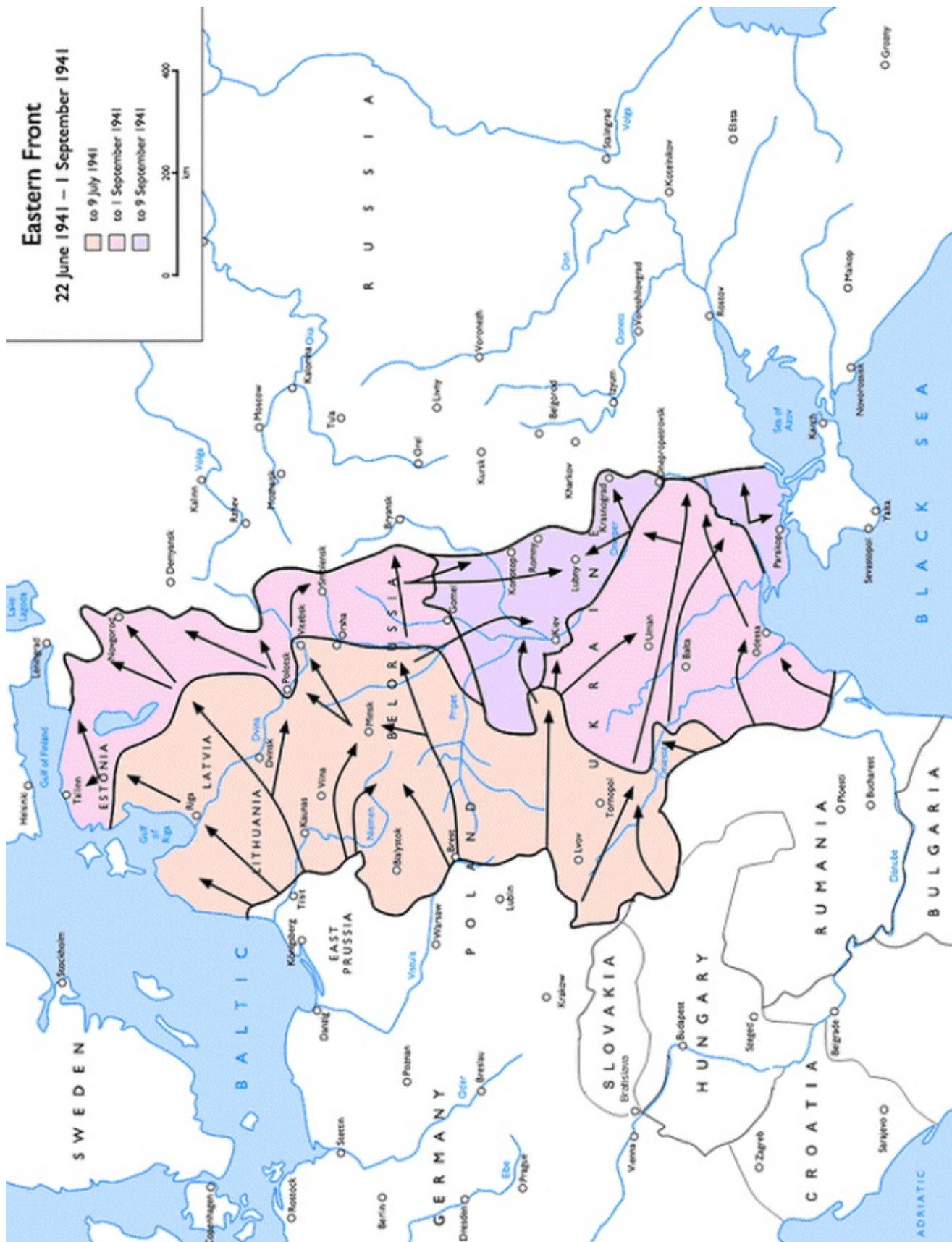
Because few Russian roads were paved, most of the main roads turned to mud when the rains and snow came in late October and early November. These quagmires combined with longer supply lines to cause the German advance to stall within sight of the spires of Moscow. The Soviet counteroffensive of December 1941 was led primarily by Siberian troops, who had trained for harsh winter combat. They arrived from the east with numerous T-34 tanks, which had been held in reserve. These Siberian troops advanced up to 100 mi (160 km) in some sectors, proving that mobile warfare was still possible during the Russian winter.

When the severe winter began, Hitler feared a repetition of Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Moscow. He ordered the German forces to hold their ground defiantly in the face of Soviet counterattacks. This became known as the "stand or die" order. Some historians have argued that this order prevented the Germans from being routed; others contend that this order restricted Germany's ability to conduct mobile defensive warfare and led to heavy casualties due to battle and the cold. Whatever the case, the Germans were driven back a short distance but ultimately, their defensive positions stabilized; this served to convince Hitler further that he could ignore the advice of his generals, something that proved disastrous for the Wehrmacht.

## **Battle of Uman**

Dates: 15 July – 8 August 1941

Was the German and allied encirclement of the 6th (General Lieutenant I.N. Muzyrchenko) and 12th (General Major P.G. Ponedelin) Soviet armies south of the city of Uman during the initial offensive operations of German Army Group South, commanded by *Generalfeldmarshall* Gerd von Rundstedt, as part of Operation Barbarossa on the Eastern Front during World War II.



The battles occurred during the Kiev defensive operation between the elements of the Red Army's Southwestern Front defending the Southern Bug bridges and the strategic rail road between Odessa and Smolensk, and elements of *Panzergruppe 1* in Western Ukraine during the latter's advance from southern Poland to Crimea.

The Soviet forces were under overall command of the Southwestern Direction, commanded by Marshal Semyon Budyonny, which included the Southwestern Front commanded by Colonel General Mikhail Kirponos. The headquarters and many subunits

of the 12th Army were able to evade the encirclement due to the inability of the German infantry formations to fully close the cauldron, however both armies were later disbanded, and escaping troops were incorporated into other units. This was among the large Axis encirclements that were executed against the Red Army in the First period of World War II.

In the initial weeks of Operation Barbarossa, Army Group South had rapidly advanced East, capturing Lviv, Ternopil and Vinnytsia, and destroying four mechanized corps that Kirponos used in a counterattack at the Brody. By 29 June 1941, the German advance was temporarily halted, but the Soviet forces were exhausted and started to retreat. With the failure of the Soviet armor counter-offensive against the German 1st Panzer-Armee, Army Group South continued to advance East and reached to within a few kilometers of Kiev by mid-July. An attempt was then made by Budyonny to counter-attack from north of Uman in the direction of Berdychiv to prevent *Panzergruppe* 1 from cutting off his lines of communication. However this counterstroke failed to contact significant German armoured forces which passed only some 50 km (31 mi) to the east of the Soviet concentration in its continued offensive. The counterstroke however exhausted the ability of Soviet formations to continue withdrawal more rapidly than the advance of the German offensive, and in mid-July German troops cut the rail road at Talnoye and other bridges over the Gorniy Tikich, and soon after the bridges over Sinucha.

### **Orders of battle**

Most of the Soviet forces were severely depleted having withdrawn under heavy assaults from the Luftwaffe from the Polish border, and the mechanised units were virtually reduced to a single "Corps" after the Brody counter-offensive, its mechanised infantry now fighting as ordinary rifle troops.

The Axis forces were divided into those of *Panzergruppe* 1 that had suffered significant losses in matériel, but retained combat effectiveness, and the large infantry formations of the German and Romanian armies that attempted to advance from the West to meet the armored troops north of Crimea, the initial strategic objective of Army Group South.

### **Red Army**

6th Army

6th Rifle Corps (reduced)

37th Rifle Corps (reduced)

4th Mechanised Corps (remnants) 15th Mechanised Corps (remnants) 5th Cavalry Corps (remnants) 4th Fortified Region (remnants) 6th Fortified Region (remnants)

12th Army

13th Rifle Corps (reduced)

17th Rifle Corps (reduced)

16th Mechanised Corps (remnants) 10th Fortified Region (remnants) 11th Fortified region (remnants) 12th Fortified region (remnants)

Elements of 18th Army

### **Wehrmacht**

6th Field Army

*Panzergruppe* 1 (reduced)

17th Field Army  
Hungarian Mechanized Corps  
3rd Romanian Army  
11th Field Army

### **The battles of encirclement**

On 10 July 1941, Budyonny was given the general command of the troops operating in the Southwestern direction, to coordinate the actions of Southwestern and Southern Fronts. Budyonny had 1.5 million troops under his command in two strategic sectors of the front to defend: at Kiev (37th and 26th armies), and Vinnytsia-Uman. No sooner had he taken up his command than he was advised of the continued Army Group South three-pronged offensives deep into the breach created between the Kiev sector's 26th Army and the 6th Army to its south as General Ewald von Kleist's *Panzergruppe* 1 drove a wedge between the two Soviet sectors of the front south of Kiev and north of Vinnytsia, capturing Berdychiv on 15 July and Koziatyn on 16 July. General Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel's 17th Field Army advanced to the South of Uman and General Eugen Ritter von Schobert's 11th Field Army advanced northward from the Romanian border.

*Stavka* and the Southern Front's command staff mistakenly assumed that the Germans were striving to reach the crossing of the Dnieper between Kiev and Cherkasy for a further offensive toward Donbass, and underestimated the danger of encirclement for the 6th and 12th armies. On 28 July, an order was given to the Southwestern and Southern Fronts to stop the Germans from crossing the Dnieper and to retreat only in the Eastern direction. As a result, an opportunity to avoid the danger of encirclement by retreating in the Southeastern direction was lost.

The effect of the closing Axis forces was to slowly force the concentration of the two Soviet Armies in an ever reduced area, with the combined HQs of the armies located in the town of Podvisokoye.

On 2 August, the encirclement was closed by the meeting of Panzer Group 1 and advance guard elements of the German 17th Field Army. This encirclement was reinforced the next day by a second joining formed when the German 16th Panzer Division met with the Hungarian Mechanized Corps (*Gyorshadtest*). By 8 August, the Soviet resistance had generally stopped. Remnants of 20 divisions from the 6th Army and the 12th Army were trapped. German sources after the war reported about 103,000 troops were taken prisoner. Included among officers taken prisoner were commanders of both the 6th and 12th armies, four corps commanders, and 11 division commanders.

### **After the encirclement**

As the pocket was eliminated, the tanks of *Panzergruppe* 1 turned north, and attacked toward Kiev on the orders to assist *Panzergruppe* 2 in closing another encirclement around that city. The Crimean objective was for a time left to the field armies; the first of many times when Hitler would change his mind about strategic objectives of the Army Groups. The *Stavka* used the respite offered by the German refocusing of *Panzergruppe* 1 to re-establish its front using the 9th Coastal Army (independent) and either reforming the destroyed armies, or bringing into line reserve 37th and 56th armies from the interior military districts, with the 38th Army eventually left to hold an over-stretched Kharkov sector of the Front.

## Battle of Kiev

The First Battle of Kiev was the German name for the operation that re-

sulted in a very large encirclement of Soviet troops in the vicinity of Kiev during World War II. It is considered the largest encirclement of troops in history. The operation ran from 7 August to 26 September 1941 as part of Operation Barbarossa, the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union. In Soviet military history, it is referred to as the Kiev Defensive Operation with somewhat different dating of 7 July – 26 September 1941.

Nearly the entire Southwestern Front of the Red Army was encircled, with the Germans claiming 665,000 captured. However, the Kiev encirclement was not complete, and small groups of Red Army troops managed to escape the cauldron days after the German pincers met east of the city, including the headquarters of Marshal Semyon Budyonny, Marshal Semyon Timoshenko and Commissar Nikita Khrushchev. The commander of the Southwestern Front—Mikhail Kirponos—was trapped behind enemy lines and killed while trying to break through.

The Kiev disaster was an unprecedented defeat for the Red Army, exceeding even the Minsk tragedy of June–July 1941. On 1 September, the Southwestern Front numbered 752–760,000 troops (850,000 including reserves and rear service organs), 3,923 guns and mortars, 114 tanks and 167 combat aircraft. The encirclement trapped 452,700 soldiers, 2,642 guns and mortars and 64 tanks, of which scarcely 15,000 escaped from the encirclement by 2 October. Overall, the Southwestern Front suffered 700,544 casualties, including 616,304 killed, captured, or missing during the month-long Battle for Kiev. As a result, five Soviet field armies (5th, 37th, 26th, 21st, and the 38th), consisting of 43 divisions, virtually ceased to exist. The 40th Army was badly affected as well. Like the Western Front before it, the Southwestern Front had to be recreated almost from scratch. After the rapid progress of Army Group Center through the central sector of the Eastern front, a huge salient developed around its junction with Army Group South by late July 1941. A substantial Soviet force, nearly the entire Southwestern Front, positioned in and around Kiev was located in the salient. While lacking mobility and armor due to high losses in tanks at the Battle of Uman, they nonetheless posed a significant threat to the German advance and were the largest single concentration of Soviet troops on the Eastern Front at that time.

On 3 August, Hitler temporarily cancelled the drive on Moscow in favor of driving south and attacking Kiev in Ukraine. However on 12 August 1941, Supplement to Directive No. 34 was issued, and it represented a compromise between Hitler, who was convinced the correct strategy was to clear the salient occupied by Soviet forces on right flank of Army Group Center in the vicinity of Kiev before resuming the drive to Moscow, and Halder, Bock and Guderian, who advocated an advance on Moscow as soon as possible. The compromise required 2nd and 3rd Panzer Groups of Army Group Center, which were redeploying in order to aid Army Group North and Army Group South respectively, be returned to Army Group Center, together with the 4th Panzer Group of Army Group North, once their objectives were achieved. Then the three Panzer Groups, under the control of Army Group Center, will lead the advance on Moscow. Initially, Halder, chief of the OKH General Staff, and Bock, commander of Army Group Center, were satisfied by the compromise, but soon their optimism faded as the operational realities of the plan proved too challenging.

On 18 August, OKH submitted a strategic survey (*Denkschrift*) to Hitler regarding the



continuation of operations in the East. The paper made the case for the drive to Moscow, arguing once again that Army Groups North and South were strong enough to accomplish their objectives without any assistance from Army Group Center. Pointing out that there was only enough time left before winter to conduct a single decisive operation against Moscow.

On 20 August, Hitler rejected the proposal based on the idea that the most important objective was to deprive the Soviets of their industrial areas. On 21 August Jodl of OKW issued a directive, which summarized Hitler's instructions, to Brauchitsch commander of the Army. The paper reiterated that the capture of Moscow before the onset of winter was not a primary objective. Rather, that the most important missions before the onset of winter were to seize the Crimea, and the industrial and coal region of the Don; isolate the oil-producing regions of the Caucasus from the rest of the Soviet Union and in the north, to encircle Leningrad and link up with the Finns. Among other instructions, it also instructed that Army Group Center is to allocate sufficient forces to ensure the destruction of the "Russian 5th Army" and, at the same time, to prepare to repel enemy counterattacks in the central sector of its front. Hitler referred to the Soviet forces in the salient collectively as the "Russian 5th Army". Halder was dismayed, and later described Hitler's plan as "utopian and unacceptable", concluding that the orders were contradictory and Hitler alone must bear the responsibility for inconsistency of his orders and that the OKH can no longer assume responsibility for what was occurring; however, Hitler's instructions still accurately reflected the original intent of the Barbarossa directive of which the OKH was aware of all along. Engel in his diary for 21 August 1941, simply summarized it as, "it was a black day for the Army". Halder offered his own resignation and advised Brauchitsch to do the same. However, Brauchitsch declined, stating Hitler would not accept the gesture, and nothing would change anyhow. Halder withdrew his offer of resignation.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-L10885  
Foto: Huschke | August 1941

On 23 August, Halder convened with Bock and Guderian in Borisov (in Belorussia), and afterwards flew with Guderian to Hitler's headquarters in East Prussia.<sup>22</sup> During a meeting between Guderian and Hitler, with neither Halder nor Brauchitsch present, Hitler allowed Guderian to make the case for driving on to Moscow, and then rejected his argument. Hitler claimed his decision to secure the northern and southern sectors of western Soviet Union were "tasks which stripped the Moscow problem of much of its significance" and was "not a new proposition, but a fact I have clearly and unequivocally stated since the beginning of the operation." Hitler also argued that the situation was even more critical because the opportunity to encircle the Soviet forces in the salient was "an unexpected opportunity, and a reprieve from past failures to trap the Soviet armies in the south." Hitler also declared, "the objections that time will be lost and the offensive on Moscow might be undertaken too late, or that the armoured units might no longer be technically able to fulfill their mission, are not valid." Hitler reiterated that once the flanks of Army Group Center were cleared, especially the salient in the south, then he would allow the army to resume its drive on Moscow; an offensive, he concluded, which "must not fail.". In point of fact Hitler had already issued the orders for the shift of Guderian's panzer group to the south. Guderian returned to his panzer group and began the southern thrust in an effort to encircle the Soviet forces in the salient.

The bulk of 2nd Panzer Group and the 2nd Army were detached from Army Group Centre and sent south. Its mission was to encircle the Southwestern Front, commanded by Budyonny, in conjunction with 1st Panzer Group of Army Group South under Kleist, which was driving up from a southeasterly direction.

## **Battle**

The Panzer armies made rapid progress. On 12 September, Kleist's 1st Panzer Group,<sup>23</sup>

which had by now turned north and crossed the Dnieper River, emerged from its bridgeheads at Cherkassy and Kremenchug. Continuing north, it cut across the rear of Budyonny's Southwestern Front. On 16 September, it made contact with Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group<sup>24</sup> advancing south, at the town of Lokhvitsa, 120 miles behind Kiev. Budyonny was now trapped and soon relieved by Stalin's order of 13 September. No successor was named, leaving the troops to their individual corps and division commanders.

After that, the fate of the encircled Russian armies was sealed. With no mobile forces or supreme commander left, there was no possibility to effect a break out. The infantry of the German 17th Army and 6th Army of Army Group South soon arrived, along with 2nd Army (also on loan from Army Group Center and marching behind Guderian's tanks). They systematically began to reduce the pocket assisted by the two Panzer armies. The encircled Soviet armies at Kiev did not give up easily. A savage battle in which the Soviets were bombarded by artillery, tanks and aircraft had to be fought before the pocket was overcome. By 19 September, Kiev had fallen, but the encirclement battle continued. After 10 days of heavy fighting, the last remnants of troops east of Kiev surrendered on 26 September. The Germans claimed 600,000 Red Army soldiers captured, although these claims have included a large number of civilians suspected of evading capture.

### **Aftermath**

By virtue of Guderian's southward turn, the Wehrmacht destroyed the entire Southwestern Front east of Kiev during September, inflicting 600,000 losses on the Red Army, while Soviet forces west of Moscow conducted a futile and costly offensive against German Army Group Center near Smolensk. These operations, such as the Yelnya Offensive, were conducted over very bad terrain against defenders in fortified strong points, and nearly all of these counter-offensives ended in disaster for the Red Army. As a result of these failed offensives, Red army formations defending Moscow were seriously weakened. With its southern flank secured, Army Group Center launched Operation Typhoon in the direction of Vyazma in October. Over the objections of Gerd von Rundstedt, Army Group South was ordered to resume the offensive and overran nearly all of the Crimea and Left Bank Ukraine before reaching the edges of the Donbas industrial region. However after four months of continuous operations his forces were at the brink of exhaustion, and suffered a major defeat in the Battle of Rostov (1941). Army Group South's infantry fared little better and failed to capture the vital city of Kharkov before nearly all of its factories, skilled laborers and equipment were evacuated east of the Ural Mountains.

### **Assessment**

Immediately after World War II ended, prominent German commanders argued that had operations at Kiev been delayed and had Operation Typhoon been launched in September rather than October, the *Wehrmacht* would have reached and captured Moscow before the onset of winter. Heinz Guderian and Fedor von Bock in particular fiercely argued that the "diversion" to Kiev would have dire consequences if the operation dragged on for too long. Winter was coming in a few weeks, and if Moscow was not taken before the first snow, the entire operation would literally bog down in the mud. However, David Glantz argued that had Operation Typhoon been launched in September, it would have met greater resistance due to Soviet forces not having been weakened by

their offensives east of Smolensk. The offensive would have also been launched with an extended right flank. Glantz also claims that regardless of the final position of German Troops when winter came, they would have still faced a counteroffensive by the 10 reserve armies raised by the Soviets toward the end of the year. If Kiev had not been taken before the Battle of Moscow, the entire operation would have ended in utter disaster for the Germans.

### **First Battle of Kharkov**

The 1st Battle of Kharkov so named by Wilhelm Keitel was the 1941 tactical battle for the city of Kharkov (now *Kharkiv*) (Ukrainian SSR) during the final phase of Operation *Barbarossa* between the German 6th Army of Army Group South and the Soviet Southwestern Front. The Soviet 38th Army was ordered to defend the city while its factories were dismantled for relocation farther east.

The German 6th Army needed to take the city in order to close the widening gap between the 4th Panzer Group and the 17th Army. By 20 October the Germans had reached the western edge of the city, it was taken by the 57th Infantry Division by 24 October. By that time, however, most of Kharkov's industrial equipment had been evacuated or rendered useless by the Red Army.







contributions was the Soviet T-34 tank that was both designed and developed at the Kharkov Tractor Factory. It was considered to be the most powerful tank plant in the country. Other factories that were located in the city included the Kharkov Aircraft Plant, Kharkov Plant of the NKVD (FED), and the Kharkov Turbine Plant. Military products that were in Kharkov before the battle started included: tanks, Su-2, artillery tractors, 82 mm mortars, sub-machine guns, ammunition, and other military equipment. The main objective for the German troops was to capture the railroad and military plants, thus they desperately tried to keep the industrial area of Kharkov intact. Adolf Hitler himself stressed the importance of those military plants stating: "... The second in importance is south of Russia, particularly the Donets Basin, ranging from the Kharkov region. There is the whole basis of [the] Russian economy; if the area is mastered then it would inevitably lead to the collapse of the entire Russian economy..."

#### Population of Kharkov

Kharkov was one of the most populated Soviet cities during World War II.

It was rated at 901,000 people on 1 May 1941. In September 1941 the population skyrocketed to one million 500 thousand people, due to multiple evacuees from other cities. After multiple attacks and many deaths, the population of Kharkov decreased to 180 – 190 thousand, which was the size after the liberation of the city in August 1943.

#### Jewish population

Kharkov was one of the most important Soviet centers for the fleeing Jewish population. According to records, Kharkov had 10,271 people of Jewish ethnicity living in the city, 75% of whom were women, children, and the elderly. After the battle, many of them were either transferred to concentration camps or executed.

#### The aftermath of Kiev

After the Battle of Kiev Army Group Center was ordered to redeploy its forces for the attack on Moscow, and so the 2nd Panzer Group turned north towards Bryansk and Kursk. Army Group South, and in particular Walther von Reichenau's 6th Army and Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel's 17th Army took the place of the Panzer Divisions. The main offensive formation of Army Group South, Paul Ludwig Ewald von Kleist's 1st Panzer Group, was in the meantime ordered south for a drive to Rostov-on-Don and the Caucasian oilfields, following Führer Directive No. 35. The burden of processing Kiev's 600.000 Prisoners of War (POWs) fell upon the 6th and 17th Armies, so while the 1st Panzer Group secured the German victory in the Battle of Melitopol, these two armies spent the next three weeks regrouping.<sup>25</sup>



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-B13548  
Foto: Hähle, Johannes | Oktober 1941

Meanwhile, ‘Stavka’, (the Soviet High Command), needed to stabilise its southern flank and poured reinforcements into the area between Kursk and Rostov, at the expense of its forces in front of Moscow. The Southwestern Front, which had been completely destroyed during the battle of Kiev, was re-established under the command of Marshal Semyon Timoshenko, one of the more capable Red Army commanders. The 6th, 21st, 38th and 40th Armies were reconstituted almost from scratch.

#### Approaching Kharkov

With the Battle of Moscow under way, the Germans had to protect their flanks, and on 6 October von Reichenau advanced through Sumy and Okhtyrka in the direction of Belgorod and Kharkov. On the same day, the 17th Army commenced its offensive from Poltava towards Lozova and Izyum to protect the lengthening flank of the 1st Panzer Army (the renamed 1st Panzer Group). The Southwestern Front’s 6th Army (commanded by Rodion Malinovsky) and 38th Army (commanded by Vladimir Tsiganov) failed to conduct a coordinated defense and were beaten back. In the lead up to the Battle of Moscow, the Red Army suffered a catastrophic defeat at Vyazma and Bryansk, suffering 700,000 casualties. The few reserves available were desperately needed to defend the Soviet capitol, and thus were unavailable to Timoshenko’s reconstituted Southwestern Front. With no reserves to plug the breach, the Stavka was forced fall back to Voronezh in order prevent a total collapse of the southern flank.

Although the main objectives of the German Army before winter fell were to capture Leningrad, Moscow and the approaches to the Caucasian oilfields, Kharkov was an important secondary objective. Besides the need to protect the flanks of its motorized spearheads, the OKH, the German Army high command, (*Oberkommando des Heeres*),

also saw the importance of Kharkov as an industrial center and railroad hub. Capturing the city meant that the Southwestern and Southern Front had to fall back on Voronezh and Stalingrad as their major transport hubs. When, in the second week of October, the dirty weather of the Rasputitsa (the 'mud' season) and the poor logistics in the area between the Dnepr and the front, (all the bridges had collapsed during combat and ice threatened the pontoons), caused the offensive to stall. Hitler personally allocated resources from the 17th Army to the 6th Army to ensure the capture of Kharkov. This, however, weakened the 17th Army's effort to protect the flank of the 1st Panzer Army and contributed to the German defeat at the Battle of Rostov. After 17 October, night frost improved the roads, but snow storms and the cold started to hamper the Germans, who were insufficiently equipped for winter operations (the German Army had planned that *Barbarossa* would be over before winter fell).

## Course of the battle

### Preparing to take the city

The task of assaulting Kharkov itself was given to the *LV. Armeekorps*

commanded by *General der Infanterie* Erwin Vierow. This corps had at its disposal the *101. Leichte-Division*, commanded by *Generalleutnant* Josef Brauner von Haydringen coming in from the north, the *57. Infanterie-Division*, commanded by *Generalmajor* Anton Dostler coming in from the south, and the *100. Leichte-Division*, who did not take part in the battle. *Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 197*, commanded by *Hauptmann* Kurt von Barisani had two of its three batteries attached to the *57. Infanterie-Division* to provide close fire support during the assault.

For the defense of Kharkov, the 216th Rifle Division had been reformed there after its destruction at Kiev. It received little to no support from other divisions or from higher command formations, because the 38th Army was in the process of a strategic retreat and the defense of Kharkov was only necessary as long as its factory equipment had not been completely evacuated.

### Battles on the western edge of the city (20–23 October)

By 21 October the 101st Light Division had reached a line about six kilometers west of Kharkov. The 228th Light Regiment spearheaded the division, its 1st and 3rd battalions taking up defensive positions on the front, with the 2nd battalion in reserve. On 22 October the regiment was ordered to conduct reconnaissance to determine the enemy's strength. That same day at noon the regiment was attacked by a Soviet infantry battalion supported by tanks. The attack was repulsed and two tanks were disabled. That night the recon information was transmitted by radio to the Division HQ. The 216th Rifle Division had occupied the western edge of the city, with machine gun nests, mortar pits and minefields in place. For the attack, the 3rd battalion (the regiment's right flank), was reinforced with two guns from the division's artillery, The 85th Artillery Regiment, a company of engineers and an 88 mm anti-aircraft gun. The 2nd battalion received the same reinforcements, but without the AA gun. The 1st battalion acted as the regimental reserve. The first battalion of the 229th Light Regiment would protect the left flank of the 228th. The attack hour was set at noon, in conjunction with the 57th Infantry Division. At 11:00 hours, a liaison was established between the 85th Artillery and the 228th Light Regiments. The artillery was not ready at the time designated, so the attack had to be

postponed. In the meantime the anti-tank company, who had been stuck in the mud at the rear, finally arrived at the front and was ordered to assign one 37 mm AT-gun platoon to every frontline battalion. At 14:25, the artillery was ready and the attack hour was set at 15:00.

#### Assault on the city (23–24 October)

The evacuation of industrial enterprises started before the Germans had a chance to attack. By 20 October 1941 it was virtually completed. Threehundred and twenty trains were sent with the equipment from 70 major factories. Kharkov was taken by von Reichenau's 6th Army, on 24 October 1941.

#### Occupation of Kharkov

The city was subject to its first occupation during the war, which lasted until 16 February 1943. The city never became part of *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine because of its proximity to the front. The staff of the *LV. Armeekorps* acted as the occupational authority, using 57.ID as an occupation force. *Generalmajor* Anton Dostler was *Stadtkommandant* until 13 December, when he was succeeded by *Generalleutnant* Alfred von Puttkamer, and Kharkov was transferred to the *Heeresgebiet* of the 6. *Armee* and put under the joint authority of the *Stadtkommandant* and *Feldkommandantur* 757.

German troops acting under the authority of the *Reichenau-Befehl* of 10 October (effectively an order to kill anybody associated with communism) terrorized the population that was left after the battle. Many of the Soviet commanders' corpses were hung off balconies to strike fear into the remaining population. Many people began to flee, causing chaos. In the early hours of 14 November, multiple buildings in the city center were blown up by time-fuses left by the retreating Red Army. Casualties included the commander (*Generalleutnant* Georg Braun) and staff of the 68. *Infanterie-Division*. The Germans arrested some 200 civilians (mostly Jews) and hanged them from the balconies of large buildings. Another 1,000 were taken as hostages and interned in the Hotel International on Dzerzhinsky Square. All of these war crimes were committed by frontline *Heer* commanders, and not by SS troops.

On 14 December, the *Stadtkommandant* ordered the Jewish population to be concentrated in a hut settlement near the Kharkov Tractor Factory. In two days, 20,000 Jews were gathered there. *Sonderkommando* 4a, commanded by *SS-Standartenführer* Paul Blobel, of *Einsatzgruppe* C started shooting the first of them in December, then continuing to kill them throughout January in a gas van. This was a modified truck that fitted 50 people in it; the van drove around the city and slowly killed the people that were trapped in it with carbon monoxide that was emitted from the vehicle itself and channeled into an airtight compartment. The victims died by a combination of carbon monoxide poisoning and suffocation. The German Army confiscated large quantities of food to be used by its troops, creating acute shortages in the Ukraine. By January 1942 around one-third of the cities 300,000 remaining inhabitants suffered from starvation. Many would die in the cold winter months.

As a result of the battles in Kharkov, the city was left in ruins. Dozens of architectural monuments were destroyed and numerous artistic treasures taken. One of Russia's known authors – Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy, wrote: "I saw Kharkov. As if it were Rome in the 5th century. A huge cemetery..."

#### Battle of Rostov

The Battle of Rostov (1941) was a battle of the Eastern Front of World War II, fought around Rostov-on-Don between the German Army Group South, commanded by General Gerd von Rundstedt and the Soviet Southern Front commanded by General Yakov Timofeyevich Cherevichenko. It comprised three phases: the German Army Group South Sea of Azov Offensive Operation (begun on 12 September 1941), the Soviet Rostov Defensive Operation (5 November 1941 – 16 November 1941) by the Southern Front, and the Rostov Offensive Operation (27 November 1941 – 2 December 1941) executed by the same Soviet Front.

After concluding the Battle of Kiev in September 1941, the German Army Group South advanced from the Dniepr to the Sea of Azov coast. Walther von Reichenau's 6th Army captured Kharkov. Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel's 17th Army marched through Poltava towards Voroshilovgrad. Erich von Manstein's 11th Army moved into the Crimea and had taken control of all of the peninsula by autumn (except Sevastopol, which held out until 3 July 1942).

Ewald von Kleist's 1st Panzer Army advanced from Kiev, and encircled Soviet troops at Melitopol in October, then attacked east along the shore of the Sea of Azov toward Rostov at the mouth of the Don river, known as the gateway to the Caucasus.

#### Sea of Azov offensive Operation

Rostov was assigned as the objective for the 11th Army now commanded by General von Schobert, however he died in a crash on the same day after landing his liaison Fieseler Storch aircraft in a minefield. To replace him, General of Infantry von Manstein was ordered to travel from the Leningrad sector of the front to the extreme southern sector. He would also receive support from the 4th Luftwaffe Air Fleet.

At this time the LIVth Army Corps of the 11th Army was still engaged in Crimea, and because the Romanian forces were still engaged in the Siege of Odessa, the Army's resources for the Rostov objective were severely limited even against retreating Red Army troops. Therefore initially von Manstein replaced the LIV Corps with the smaller XXXth Army Corps and XLIXth Mountain Corps, and ordered the LIV Corps into the first echelon in the advance to Rostov.

Late in September the 3rd Romanian Army joined the 11th Army in its advance towards Rostov, but was severely depleted by the attacks of the Soviet 9th and 18th Armies on 26 September. This forced a halt to the Army's advance to safeguard its flank, and forced von Manstein to use his only mobile reserve unit, the Leibstandarte Brigade to shore up Romanian defenses.

#### Rostov Defensive Operation

The Soviet counter-attack delivered as part of the general Donbass-Rostov Strategic Defensive Operation (29 September 1941 – 16 November 1941) also forced the Army Group Commander to order his 1st Panzer Army to manoeuvre in order to be better placed to counter any further Soviet thrusts in the Romanian sector of the front, and also to attempt an encirclement of the two Soviet Armies, which was partly successful in the area of Chernigovka where the commander of the 18th Soviet Army General-Lieutenant Smirnov was killed during the breakout attempt between 5 and 10 October 1941. This was interpreted by Hitler as such a success that he declared "The battle of the Sea of Azov is over." on 11 October before the troops had even reached their objective. As a



commemorative gesture, Hitler issued the order to redesignate the Leibstandarte Brigade as 1st SS Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler.

The German 11th Army was ordered back to Crimea to effect the breakthrough of the Isthmus of Perekop.

Perceiving that the way to Rostov and the Caucasus was open, Hitler issued an order transferring the objective from the 11th Army to the 1st Panzer Army and attaching to it ill prepared Romanian 3rd Army, the Italian Alpine Corps, and the Slovakian Motorised Brigade.

During the subsequent reorganisation of Axis forces the 3rd Panzer Corps and 14th Panzer Corps took the lead, supported by the XLIX Mountain Corps recently arrived from Crimea.

By 17 October 1941 the Mius river was crossed by the 14th Panzer Division and Taganrog was captured by German troops, with the mountain troops entering Stalino, forcing the newly formed 12th Army into a renewed withdrawal. However the Red Army was at this stage fortunate in that the Autumn rains had begun, and the infamous Rasputitsa had set in slowing the 1st Panzer Army's advance to "meter by meter". This meant that the leading German units did not reach the outskirts of Rostov until mid-November, having lost contact with the Red Army in the meantime. The assault on Rostov began on 17 November, and on 21 November the Germans took Rostov. However, the German lines were over-extended, and von Kleist's warnings that his left flank was vulnerable and that his tanks were ineffective in the freezing weather were ignored.

### Rostov Offensive Operation

On 27 November the Soviet 37th Army, commanded by Lieutenant-General Anton Ivanovich Lopatin, as part of the Rostov Strategic Offensive Operation (17 November 1941 – 2 December 1941), counter-attacked the 1st Panzer Army's spearhead from the north, forcing them to pull out of the city. Adolf Hitler countermanded the retreat. When von Rundstedt refused to obey, Hitler sacked him, and replaced him with von Reichenau. However, von Reichenau saw at once that von Rundstedt was right and succeeded in persuading Hitler, via Franz Halder, to authorise the withdrawal, and the 1st Panzer Army was forced back to the Mius River at Taganrog. It was the first significant German withdrawal of the war.

## Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945

### Directive No 21

Führer and Supreme Commander

Führer Headquarters, of the Armed Forces 18th December 1940. 9 copies

### Directive No, 21 'Case Barbarossa'

The German Armed Forces must be prepared, even before the conclusion of the war against England, *to crush Soviet Russia in a rapid campaign* ('Case Barbarossa').

The Army will have to employ all available formations to this end, with the reservation that occupied territories must be insured against surprise attacks.

The Air Force will have to make available for this Eastern campaign supporting forces of such strength that the Army will be able to bring land operations to a speedy conclusion and that Eastern Germany will be as little damaged as possible by enemy air attack. This build-up of a focal point in the East will be limited only by the need to protect from air

attack the whole combat and arsenal area which we control, and to ensure that attacks on England, and especially upon her imports, are not allowed to lapse.

The main efforts of the *Navy* will continue to be directed against *England* even during the Eastern campaign.

In certain circumstances I shall issue orders for the *deployment* against Soviet Russia eight weeks before the operation is timed to begin. Preparations which require more time than this will be put in hand now, in so far as this has not already been done, and will be concluded by 15th May 1941.

It is of decisive importance that our intention to attack should not be known.

The preparations of the High Commands will be made on the following basis:

#### I. *General Intention*

The bulk of the Russian Army stationed in Western Russia will be destroyed by daring operations led by deeply penetrating armoured spearheads. Russian forces still capable of giving battle will be prevented from withdrawing into the depths of Russia.

The enemy will then be energetically pursued and a line will be reached from which the Russian Air Force can no longer attack German territory. The final objective of the operation is to erect a barrier against Asiatic Russia on the general line Volga—Archangel. The last surviving industrial area of Russia in the Urals can then, if necessary, be eliminated by the Air Force.

In the course of these operations the Russian *Baltic Fleet* will quickly lose its bases and will then no longer be capable of action.

The effective operation of the Russian *Air Force* is to be prevented from the beginning of the attack by powerful blows.

#### II. *Probable Allies and their Tasks*

1. On the flanks of our operations we can count on the active support of *Rumania* and *Finland* in the war against Soviet Russia.

The High Command of the Armed Forces will decide and lay down in due time the manner in which the forces of these two countries will be brought under German command.

2. It will be the task of *Rumania* to support the attack of the German southern flank, at least at the outset, with its best troops; to hold down the enemy where German forces are not engaged; and to provide auxiliary services in the rear areas.

3. *Finland* will cover the advance of the *Northern Group* of German forces moving from Norway (detachments of Group XXI) and will operate in conjunction with them. Finland will also be responsible for eliminating Hango.

4. It is possible that *Swedish* railways and roads may be available for the movement of the German Northern Group, by the beginning of the operation at the latest.

#### III. *Conduct of Operations*

A. *Army* (in accordance with plans submitted to me):

In the theatre of operations, which is divided by the Pripet Marshes into a Southern and a Northern sector, the main weight of attack will be delivered in the *Northern* area. Two Army Groups will be employed here. The more southerly of these two Army Groups (in the centre of the whole front) will have the task of advancing with powerful armoured and motorized formations from the area about and north of Warsaw, and routing the enemy forces in White Russia. This will make it possible for strong mobile forces to advance northwards and, in conjunction with the Northern Army Group operating out of East

Prussia in the general direction of Leningrad, to destroy the enemy forces operating in the Baltic area. Only after the fulfilment of this first essential task, which must include the occupation of Leningrad and Kronstadt, will the attack be continued with the intention of occupying Moscow, an important centre of communications and of the armaments industry.

Only a surprisingly rapid collapse of Russian resistance could justify the simultaneous pursuit of both objectives.

*The most important task of Group XXI, even during these Eastern operations, remains the protection of Norway.* Any forces available after carrying out this task will be employed in the North (Mountain Corps), at first to protect the Pet-samo area and its iron ore mines and the Arctic highway, then to advance with Finnish forces against the Murmansk railway and thus prevent the passage of supplies to Murmansk by land.

The question whether an operation of this kind can be carried out with *stronger* German forces (two or three divisions) from the Rovaniemi area and south of it will depend on the willingness of Sweden to make its railways available for troop transport.

It will be the duty of the main body of the Finnish Army, in conjunction with the advance of the German North flank, to hold down the strongest possible Russian forces by an attack to the West, or on both sides of Lake Ladoga, and to occupy Hango.

The Army Group operating *South* of the Pripet Marshes will also seek, in a concentric operation with strong forces on either flank, to destroy all Russian forces west of the Dnieper in the Ukraine. The *main attack* will be carried out from the Lublin area in the general direction of Kiev, while forces in Rumania will carry out a wide enclosing movement across the lower Pruth. It will be the task of the Rumanian Army to hold down Russian forces in the intervening area.

When the battles north and south of the Pripet Marshes are ended the pursuit of the enemy will have the following aims :

In the *South* the early capture of the Donets Basin, important for war industry.

In the *North* a quick advance to Moscow. The capture of this city would represent a decisive political and economic success and would also bring about the capture of the most important railway junctions.

#### *B. Air Force*

It will be the duty of the Air Force to paralyse and eliminate the effectiveness of the Russian Air Force as far as possible. It will also support the main operations of the Army, i.e. those of the central Army Group and of the vital flank of the Southern Army Group. Russian railways will either be destroyed or, in accordance with operational requirements, captured at their most important points (river crossings) by the bold employment of parachute and airborne troops.

In order that we may concentrate all our strength against the enemy Air Force and for the immediate support of land operations, the Russian armaments industry will not be attacked during the main operations. Such attacks will be made only after the conclusion of mobile warfare, and they will be concentrated first on the Urals area.

#### *G. Navy.*

It will be the duty of the Navy during the attack on Soviet Russia to protect our own coasts and to prevent the breakout of enemy naval units from the Baltic. As the Russian Baltic fleet will, with the capture of Leningrad, lose its last base and will then be in a hopeless position, major naval action will be avoided until this occurs.

After the elimination of the Russian fleet the duty of the Navy will be to protect the entire maritime traffic in the Baltic and the transport of supplies by sea to the Northern, flank (clearing of minefields!).

IV. All steps taken by Commanders-in-Chief on the basis of this directive must be phrased on the unambiguous assumption that they are *precautionary measures* undertaken in case Russia should alter its present attitude towards us. The number of officers employed on preliminary preparations will be kept as small as possible and further staffs will be designated as late as possible and only to the extent required for the duties of each individual. Otherwise there is a danger that premature knowledge of our preparations, whose execution cannot yet be timed with any certainty, might entail the gravest political and military disadvantages. V. I await submission of the plans of Commanders-in-Chief on the basis of this directive.

The preparations made by all branches of the Armed Forces, together with time-tables, are to be reported to me through the High Command of the Armed Forces.

*signed: adolf hitler*

### ***Directive No 32***

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Führer Headquarters, 11th June 1941.

9 draft copies

### **Directive No. 32 Preparations for the period after 'Barbarossa' A. After the destruction of the Soviet Armed Forces, Germany and Italy**

will be military masters of the European Continent - with the temporary exception of the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>26</sup> No serious threat to Europe by land will then remain. The defence of this area, and foreseeable future offensive action, will require considerably smaller military forces than have been needed hitherto.

The main efforts of the armaments industry can be diverted to the Navy and Air Force. Closer cooperation between Germany and France should and will tie down additional English forces, will eliminate the threat from the rear in the North African theatre of war, will further restrict the movements of the British Fleet in the Western Mediterranean and will protect the southwestern flank of the European theatre, including the Atlantic seaboard of North and West Africa, from Anglo-Saxon attack.

In the near future Spain will have to face the question whether she is prepared to cooperate in driving the British from Gibraltar or not. The possibility of exerting strong pressure on Turkey and Iran improves the prospect of making direct or indirect use of these countries in the struggle against England.

B. This situation, which will be created by the victorious conclusion of the campaign in the East, can confront the Armed Forces with the following strategic tasks for the late autumn of 1941 and the winter of 1941-2: 1. The *newly conquered territories in the East* must be organized, made secure and, in full cooperation with the Armed Forces, exploited economically.

The strength of the security forces required in Russia can only be forecast with certainty at a later date. In all probability, however, about sixty divisions and one Air Fleet will be sufficient, with allied and friendly forces, for our further duties in the East.

2. The *struggle against the British positions in the Mediterranean and in Western Asia*

will be continued by converging attacks launched from Libya through Egypt, from Bulgaria through Turkey, and in certain circumstances also from Transcaucasia through Iran.

(a) In *North Africa* it is important that Tobruk should be eliminated and conditions thereby established for the continuation of the German-Italian attack on the Suez Canal. This attack should be planned for about November on the understanding that the German Africa Corps will be by then brought to the highest possible efficiency in personnel and equipment and with adequate reserves of all kinds under its own hand (by the conversion of 5th Light Division into a full armoured division), so that it is not necessary to move further large German formations to North Africa. The preparations for the attack require that the tempo of transport be quickened by all means available, including the employment of ports in French North Africa and, when possible, the new sea route from Southern Greece.

It will be the duty of the Navy, in cooperation with the Italian Navy, to arrange for the necessary tonnage by chartering French and neutral shipping.

The possibility of moving German motor torpedo boats to the Mediterranean will be examined.

The Italian Navy will be afforded all support in improving unloading facilities in North African ports.

Commander-in-Chief Air Force will transfer to the Africa Corps sufficient air units and anti-aircraft artillery for the operation, as these become superfluous in the East. He will also reinforce Italian protection of seaborne convoys by the use of German air formations. In order to coordinate the handling of transport, the Supply and Transport Office of the Armed Forces Overseas [*Heimatstab Übersee*] has been established, which will work on the lines laid down by the High Command of the Armed Forces, in cooperation with the German General at Italian Armed Forces Headquarters, and with Commander Armed Forces Southeast.

(b) In view of the expected British reinforcement of the Near and Middle East, especially for the defence of the Suez Canal, a German operation *from Bulgaria through Turkey* will be planned, with the aim of attacking the British position on the Suez Canal from the East also.

To this end plans must be made to assemble in Bulgaria as soon as possible sufficient forces to render Turkey politically amenable or to overpower her resistance.

(c) If the collapse of the Soviet Union has created the necessary conditions, preparations will be made for the dispatch of a motorized expeditionary force *from Transcaucasia against Iraq*, in conjunction with operations mentioned in paragraph (b) above. (d) Exploitation of the Arab Freedom Movement. The situation of the English in the Middle East will be rendered more precarious, in the event of major German operations, if more British forces are tied down *at the right moment* by civil commotion or revolt. All military, political, and propaganda measures to this end must be closely coordinated during the preparatory period. As central agency abroad I nominate *Special Staff F*, which is to take part in all plans and actions in the Arab area, whose headquarters are to be in the area of the Commander Armed Forces Southeast. The most competent available experts and agents will be made available to it.

The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces will specify the duties of Special Staff F, in agreement with the Foreign Minister where political questions are involved.<sup>27</sup>



3. *Closing of the Western Entrance to the Mediterranean by the elimination of Gibraltar:* Preparations for 'Undertaking Felix', already planned, will be resumed to the fullest extent even during the course of operations in the east. It may be assumed that unoccupied French territory may also be used, if not for German troop movements, then at least for the movement of supplies. The cooperation of French naval and air forces is also within the bounds of possibility.

After the capture of Gibraltar only such forces will be moved to Spanish Morocco as are necessary to protect the Straits.

The defence of the seaboard of North and West Africa, the elimination of English possessions in West Africa, and the recovery of the areas controlled by de Gaulle, will be the tasks of the French who will be granted such reinforcements as the situation requires. The use of West African bases by the Navy and Air Force, and possibly also the occupation of the Atlantic Islands, will be facilitated by our control of the Straits. 4. In addition to these contemplated operations against the British position in the Mediterranean, the 'Siege of England' must be resumed with the utmost intensity by the Navy and Air Force after the conclusion of the campaign in the East.

All weapons and equipment required for this purpose will be given priority in the general armaments programme. At the same time German Air Defences will be strengthened to the maximum. Preparations for the invasion of England will serve the double purpose of tying down English forces at home and of bringing about a final English collapse through a landing in England.

C. The time at which the operations planned in the Mediterranean and the Near East can be undertaken cannot yet be foreseen. The strongest operational effect would be achieved by a simultaneous attack on Gibraltar, Egypt, and Palestine.

Whether this will, in fact, be possible depends upon a number of factors which cannot, at the moment, be foreseen, but chiefly on the power of the Air Force to provide the forces necessary for the simultaneous support of these three operations.

D. I request Commanders-in-Chief to begin the planning and organization of these operations as outlined above and to keep me informed of the results so that I may issue final directives before the campaign in the East is over.

*signed: warlimont*

### ***Directive No 32a***

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Führer Headquarters, 14th July 1941.

13 copies

On the basis of my intentions for the future prosecution of the war, as stated in Directive 33, I issue the following general instructions concerning personnel and equipment:

#### ***1. General:***

Our military mastery of the European continent after the overthrow of Russia will make it possible considerably to reduce the strength of the *Army*. Within the limits of this reduced *Army*, the relative strength of the armoured forces will be greatly increased.

The manning and equipment of the *Navy* will be limited to what is essential for the direct prosecution of the war against England and, should the occasion arise, against America.

The *main effort of equipment* will be devoted to the *Air Force*, which will be greatly strengthened.

## 2. *Manpower:*

The future strength of the Army will be laid down by me, after receiving proposals from Commander-in-Chief Army.

The Replacement Army will be reduced to conform with the diminished strength of the Army.

The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces will decide, in accordance with my directives, on the employment of the manpower which will become available for the Armed Forces as a whole and for the armaments industry.

The Class of 1932 will be called up at the latest possible date, and will be distributed by the High Command of the Armed Forces in accordance with the future tasks of the various branches of the Armed Forces.

## 3. *Arms and Equipment:*

### *(a) The Armed Forces as a whole.*

The arming and equipment of troops will be reduced to the requirements of the situation in the field, without reference to existing establishment scales.

All formations not intended for actual combat (security, guard, construction, and similar units) will be armed basically with captured weapons and second line equipment.

All requests for 'general Armed Forces equipment' will be immediately reduced or rejected in relation to available supplies, need, and wear and tear. Continued manufacture of such weapons as can be proved to be necessary will be decided in agreement with the Minister for Armaments and Munitions.

Plant (buildings and machine tools) already in use will not be expanded unless it can be shown that existing equipment cannot be put to full use by the introduction of shift working.

Work on all such permanent buildings for industry and the Armed Forces as are intended for use in peacetime rather than for the *immediate* prosecution of the war and for the production of arms, will be halted. Construction directly necessary for the conduct of the war and for armaments will remain subject to the regulations of the General Plenipotentiary for Building. Buildings erected by civilian contractors will be limited by him to such as are most essential to the war effort.

Contracts of all kinds which do not comply with these principles will be immediately withdrawn.

The manpower, raw materials, and plant released by these measures will be made available for the main tasks of equipment and placed, as soon as possible, at the disposal of the Minister of Armaments and Munitions for use elsewhere.

### *(b) Army:*

The extension of arms and equipment and the production of new weapons, munitions, and equipment will be related, with immediate effect, to the smaller forces which are contemplated for the future. Where orders have been placed for more than six months ahead all contracts beyond that period will be cancelled. Current deliveries will only continue if their immediate cancellation would be uneconomic.

*The following are exceptions to these limitations:*

The tank programme for the motorized forces (which are to be considerably reinforced) including the provision of special weapons and tanks of the heaviest type.

The new programme for heavy anti-tank guns, including their tractors and ammunition.

The programme for additional equipment for expeditionary forces, which will include four further armoured divisions for employment in the tropics, drawn from the overall strength

of the armoured forces.

Preparations for the manufacture of equipment unrelated to these programmes will be halted.

The Army's programme for anti-aircraft guns is to be coordinated with that of the Air Force, and represents a single unified scheme from the manufacturing point of view. All available plant will be fully employed in order to achieve the delivery targets which I have laid down.

(c) *Navy*:

The Navy will continue its submarine programme. Construction will be limited to what is directly connected with this programme. Expansion of the armaments programme over and above this is to be stopped. (d) *Air Force*:

*The overall armaments programme* will concentrate on carrying out the expanded 'Air Armaments programme' which I have approved. Its realization up to the spring of 1942 is of decisive importance for the whole war effort. For this purpose all available manpower from the Armed Forces and industry will be employed. The allocation of aluminium to the Air Force will be increased as far as possible.

The speed of the programme, and the extent to which it can be fulfilled, will be linked to the increased production of light metals and mineral oil. 4. *The programme for powder and explosives* will concentrate upon the requirements of the Air Force (bombs and anti-aircraft ammunition) at the expense of the requirements of the Army. Buildings will be restricted to the barest essentials and confined to the simplest type of construction.

Production of explosives will be limited to the existing basis. 5. It is particularly important to ensure supplies of *raw materials and mineral oil*. Coal production and the extension of the light metal, artificial rubber, substitute materials, and liquid fuel industries will be supported by the Armed Forces in every way, particularly by the release of miners and specialist workers. The construction of the necessary plans for the extended air armaments industry will be developed simultaneously. 6. The allocation of manpower, raw materials, and plant will be made in accordance with these principles.

7. The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces will issue the necessary orders for the Armed Forces, and the

Minister for Armaments and Munitions for his sector, in mutual agreement.

*signed: adolf hitler*

### ***Directive No 33***

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Führer Headquarters, July 1941. 13 copies

**Directive No. 33 Continuation of the war in the East** 1. The second series of battles in the East has ended, along the whole

front, with the breach of the Stalin Line and the deep thrust of the armoured forces. In the area of Army Group Centre, mopping up of the strong enemy forces which still remain between the motorized formations will still require considerable time.

The northern flank of Army Group South is restricted in its freedom of movement and effectiveness by the fortress of Kiev and the Russian 5th Army in its rear.

2. The aim of the next operations must be to prevent any further sizeable enemy forces from withdrawing into the depths of Russia, and to wipe them out.

Plans will be made for this as follows:

*(a) South-eastern Front:*

The most important object is, by concentric attacks, to destroy the enemy 12th and 6th Armies while they are still west of the Dnieper. The main Rumanian forces will support these operations in the south.

The enemy 5th Army can also be quickly and decisively defeated and annihilated by cooperation between forces on the south flank of Army Group Centre and the northern flank of Army Group South. While infantry divisions of Army Group Centre move southward, other forces, chiefly motorized, after carrying out the tasks assigned to them, securing their lines of communication and providing cover in the direction of Moscow, will advance south-eastwards in order to cut off the withdrawal of enemy forces which have crossed to the further bank of the Dnieper, to prevent their withdrawal deeper into Russia, and to destroy them.

*(b) Central Part of the Eastern Front:*

After the destruction of the many pockets of enemy troops which have been surrounded and the establishment of lines of communication, Army Group Centre, while continuing to advance to Moscow with infantry formations, will use these motorized units which are not employed in the rear of the Dnieper line to cut communications between Moscow and Leningrad, and so cover the right flank of the advance on Leningrad by Army Group North.

*(c) Northern Part of the Eastern Front:*

The advance on Leningrad will be resumed only when 18th Army has made contact with 4th Armoured Group and the extensive flank in the east is adequately protected by 16th Army. At the same time Army Group North must endeavour to prevent Russian forces still in action in Estonia from withdrawing to Leningrad.

Early capture of the Baltic Islands, which might be used as bases by the Soviet Navy, is desirable.

*(a) Finnish Front:*

It remains the task of the main Finnish forces, reinforced by most of 16th Division, to attack the enemy opposing them with the main weight of attack east of Lake Ladoga and, later, in conjunction with Army Group North, to destroy them.

The object of the attack under the direction of XXXVI Corps and the Mountain Corps remains as already directed, except that stronger support from the air cannot be expected for the moment and operations may therefore have to be temporarily delayed.

3. The task of the *Air Force* is, in particular, as forces become available from the Central front, to support operations on the South-eastern front at their most important point by bringing air and anti-aircraft units into action, and, if necessary, by early reinforcement or regrouping. The attack on Moscow by the bomber forces of 2nd Air Fleet, temporarily reinforced by bomber forces from the West, will be carried out as soon as possible as 'reprisal for Russian attacks on Bucharest and Helsinki'. 4. The *Navy* will continue to ensure the free passage of sea-borne traffic, especially of supplies for the land forces, as far as enemy activity at sea and in the air allows. Further, with the increasing threat to enemy bases, appropriate steps are to be taken to prevent the escape of enemy ships to Swedish ports, where they would be interned.

As naval forces in the Baltic become free, motor torpedo boats and minesweepers - one flotilla of each to start with - will be transferred to the Mediterranean.

To support German operations in Finland, which might be hampered by the arrival of

enemy reinforcements by sea, a few submarines will be transferred to the Arctic Ocean. 5. All three branches of the Armed Forces in the West and North will bear in mind the possibility of British attacks on the Channel Islands and the Norwegian coast. Plans must be made for the quick transfer of air forces from the West to all parts of Norway.

*signed: adolf hitler*

### ***Directive No 33a***

The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces  
Führer Headquarters, 23rd July 1941.

14 copies

### ***Supplement to Directive No. 33***

After a report by Commander-in-Chief Army, the Führer on 22nd July issued the following orders to amplify and extend Directive 33. 1. *Southern Part of the Eastern Front:*

The enemy forces which are still west of the Dnieper must be decisively defeated and dispersed. As soon as the state of operations and of supplies allows, 1st and 2nd Armoured Groups will be concentrated under command of 4th Tank Army and, with the support of infantry and mounted divisions, will occupy the Kharkov industrial area and thrust forward across the Don to Caucasia.

The bulk of the infantry divisions will then occupy the Ukraine, the Crimea, and the area of Central Russia up to the Don. The security of the area immediately south-west of the Bug is to be left to the Rumanian Army. 2. *Central Part of the Eastern Front:*

After mopping-up operations around Smolensk and on the southern flank, Army Group Centre, whose infantry formations drawn from both its armies are strong enough for the purpose, will defeat such enemy forces as remain between Smolensk and Moscow, by an advance on the left flank if possible. It will then capture Moscow.

3rd Armoured Group will come under temporary command of Army Group North to secure its right flank and to surround the enemy in the Leningrad area.

For the further task of thrusting forward to the Volga, the mobile forces of 3rd Armoured Group will probably be once more available.

### *3. Northern Part of the Eastern Front:*

The subordination to it of 3rd Armoured Group will enable Army Group North to employ strong forces of infantry for an attack in the direction of Leningrad, and to avoid expending its mobile forces in frontal attacks over difficult terrain.

Enemy forces still in action in Estonia will be destroyed. Their embarkation and withdrawal across the Narva towards Leningrad will be prevented.

3rd Armoured Group is to be returned to Army Group Centre on the completion of its task.

4. The High Command of the Army will plan *further operations* so that large parts of Army Group North, including 4th Armoured Group and some of the infantry formations of Army Group South, may be moved back to Germany as soon as the situation allows. 3rd Armoured Group will be rendered fully operational by drawing upon 4th Armoured Group for equipment and personnel, and 1st and 2nd Armoured Groups will, if necessary, supply themselves by merging units. 5. The orders given for *Navy and Air Force* in Directive 33 remain valid. In addition they are to ease the situation of the Mountain Corps: the *Navy*, by the determined employment of its forces in the Arctic Ocean (now



reinforced); the Air Force, by the transfer of several dive-bomber groups to the Finnish theatre once the fighting around Smolensk is over. This will also reduce the temptation for England to intervene in the fighting along the Arctic coast.

6. The troops available for *securing the conquered Eastern territories* will, in view of the size of this area, be sufficient for their duties only if the occupying power meets resistance, not by legal punishment of the guilty, but by striking such terror into the population that it loses all will to resist. The Commanders concerned are to be held responsible, together with the troops at their disposal, for quiet conditions in their areas. They will contrive to maintain order, not by requesting reinforcements, but by employing suitably draconian methods.

*signed: keitel*

### ***Directive No 34***

The Führer and Supreme ‘ Commander of the Armed Forces  
Führer Headquarters, 30th July 1941.

14 copies

### ***Directive No. 34***

The development of the situation in the last few days, the appearance of strong enemy forces on the front and to the flanks of Army Group Centre, the supply position, and the need to give and and 3rd Armoured Groups about ten days to rehabilitate their units, make it necessary to postpone *for the moment* the further tasks and objectives laid down in Directive 33 of 19th July and in the supplement of 23rd July. I therefore order as follows:

I. i. In the *Northern Sector* of the Eastern front the main attack will continue between Lake Ilmen and Narva towards Leningrad, with the aim of encircling Leningrad and making contact with the Finnish Army. North of Lake Ilmen this attack will be covered in the Volkhov sector; South of Lake Ilmen it will be carried northeastwards only so far as is required to protect the right flank of the attack north of the lake. The situation around Velikiye Luki will have been previously cleared up. All forces not required for these operations will be transferred to take part in the flank attacking north of Lake Ilmen. The intended thrust by 3rd Armoured Group against the high ground around Valdai will be postponed until armoured formations are fully ready for action. Instead, the left flank of Army Group Centre will advance sufficiently far north-eastwards to afford protection to the right flank of Army Group North. Estonia must first of all be mopped up by all the forces of 18th Army; only then may divisions advance towards Leningrad.

2. Army Group *Centre* will go over to the defensive, taking advantage on suitable terrain. Attacks with limited objectives may still be mounted in so far as they are necessary to secure favourable spring-boards for our offensive against Soviet 21st Army.

2nd and 3rd Armoured Groups will be withdrawn from the front line for quick rehabilitation as soon as the situation allows.

3. Operations on the *South-eastern front* will, for the present, be conducted only by formations of Army Group South.

Their objective must be to destroy the strong enemy forces west of the Dnieper and, in addition, by securing bridgeheads near to the south of Kiev, to establish the conditions necessary for bringing 1st Armoured Group later to the eastern bank of the Dnieper.

The 5th Red Army, fighting in the marshland north-west of Kiev, must be brought to battle west of the Dnieper and annihilated. Any danger that it might break through to the north

across the Pripet must be countered in good time.

#### *4. Finnish Front:*

The attack in the direction of Kandalaksha will be halted. The threat to the flank of the Mountain Corps from the Motovski Bight is to be eliminated. Only so many forces are to be left with XXXVI Corps as are necessary for defence and to give the impression of further offensive preparations. In the area of III (Finnish) Corps an attempt will be made to cut the Murmansk railway, particularly towards Louhi. All forces, suitable for this attack will be moved to this area; other available forces will be transferred to the Karelian Army. Should difficulties of terrain bring the offensive to a standstill in the area of the III (Finnish) Corps too, the German forces will be withdrawn and employed with the Karelian Army. This applies particularly to mobile units, tanks, and heavy artillery.

The 6th Mountain Division will join the Mountain Corps, using all available transport routes. The Foreign Office will settle whether the railway through Sweden to Narvik may also be used.

#### *II. Air Force.*

##### *1. North-eastern Front:*

Air Force will switch the main weight of air attack to the North-eastern front by attaching the bulk of VIII Air Corps to 1st Air Fleet. These reinforcements will be moved up in time to go into action at the beginning of the offensive by Army Group North and at its vital point (early morning 6th August).

##### *2. Centre:*

The task of such units of the Air Force as remain with Army Group Centre is to afford such fighter-cover as is absolutely necessary on the and and gth Army fronts and to support possible local attacks. Attacks on Moscow will continue.

##### *3. South-eastern Front:*

Tasks as already laid down. It is not proposed to reduce the strength of the air forces with Army Group South.

##### *4. Finland:*

The main task of 5th Air Fleet is to support the Mountain Corps. The offensive by III Finnish Corps will also be supported at favourable points. Preparations are to be made for the employment of forces in support of the Karelian Army should this be necessary,  
*signed: adolf hitler*

#### ***Directive 34a***

The High Command of the Armed Forces  
Führer Headquarters, 12th August 1941.

14 copies

#### ***Supplement to Directive No. 34***

The Fuhrer has issued the following orders for the prosecution of operations-in the East, supplementary to Directive 34:

##### *1. South-eastern Front:*

Through the battle of annihilation at Uman, Army Group South has won definite superiority over the enemy and freedom to undertake extensive operations on the further side of the Dnieper. As soon as it has gained a firm foothold east of the river, and has ensured the safety of its communications in the rear, it will possess the necessary strength, with corresponding action by allied forces and the cooperation of the Rumanian Army, to

achieve with its own forces the far-reaching objectives which lie ahead of it.

Its next task is:

(a) To prevent the establishment by the enemy of a planned defensive front behind the Dnieper.

For this purpose the largest possible portion of enemy forces still west of the Dnieper must be destroyed, and bridgeheads across the Dnieper won as soon as possible.

(b) To occupy the Crimean peninsula, which is particularly dangerous as an enemy air base against the Rumanian oilfields.

(c) To occupy the Donets area and the industrial area of Kharkov. The battle for the Crimean peninsula may require mountain troops. The possibility of their use later, across the Kerch straits, in the direction of Batum, will be considered.

The attack on the city of Kiev itself will be halted. It is proposed to destroy the city by incendiary bombs and gunfire as soon as the supply position allows.

This entails a large number of tasks for the *Air Force*. These cannot be carried out simultaneously, but must be accomplished one after another through the largest possible concentration of forces. Such concentrations will be achieved by the addition of dive-bomber units, first in the battles between Kanev and Boguslav, and then for the purpose of securing a bridgehead over the Dnieper.

## *2. Central Part of the Eastern Front:*

The most important task here is to eliminate the enemy flanking positions, projecting deeply to the west, with which he is holding down large forces of infantry on both flanks of Army Group Centre. For this purpose close cooperation in timing and direction on the southern flank, between the adjoining flanks of Army Group South and Army Group Centre, is particularly important. The Russian 5th Army must be deprived of any further power to operate by cutting the roads to Ovruch and Mozyrj by which it obtains supplies and reinforcements, and then finally annihilated.

On the northern flank the enemy must be defeated as soon as possible by the employment of mobile forces west of Toropets. The left flank of Army Group Centre will then be moved as far northwards as is necessary to relieve Army Group North of anxiety about its right flank and to enable it to transfer infantry divisions to take part in the attack on Leningrad. Apart from this, efforts will be made beforehand to move some one division (icznd Division) to Army Group North in reserve.

Only after these threats to our ranks have been entirely overcome and armoured formations have been rehabilitated will it be possible to continue the offensive, on a wide front and with echeloning of both flanks, against the strong enemy forces which have been concentrated for the defence of Moscow. The object of operations must then be to deprive the enemy, before the coming of winter, of his government, armament, and traffic centre around Moscow, and thus prevent the rebuilding of his defeated forces and the orderly working of government control.

Before the beginning of this attack on Moscow operations against Leningrad must be concluded, and the aircraft from 2nd Air Fleet which are at present attached to 1st Air Fleet must again be available to 2nd Air Fleet.

## *3. North-eastern Front:*

The attack which is now in progress should result in the encirclement of Leningrad and a junction with the Finnish forces.

With regard to cooperation by the *Air Force*, it should be a principle, as far as the position of our own airfields allows, always, if possible, to concentrate on a single point, in order

to secure the utmost effect.

As soon as the situation allows, enemy air and naval bases on Dago and Osel will be eliminated by a combined operation by Army, Naval, and Air Forces.

It is urgently necessary that enemy airfields from which attacks on Berlin are evidently being made should be destroyed.

The Army is responsible for the coordinated planning of operations. The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces. *signed: keitel*

### **Directive No 35**

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

### **Directive No. 35**

Führer Headquarters, 6th September 1941.

10 copies

Combined with the progressive encirclement of the Leningrad area, the initial successes against the enemy forces in the area between the flanks of Army Groups South and Centre have provided favourable conditions for a decisive operation against the Timoshenko

Army Group which is attacking on the Central front.<sup>28</sup> This Army Group must be defeated and annihilated in the limited time which remains before the onset of winter weather. For this purpose it is necessary to concentrate all the forces of the Army and Air Force which can be spared on the flanks and which can be brought up in time.

On the basis of the report of Commander-in-Chief Army, I issue the following orders for the preparation and execution of these operations: i. *On the Southern sector of the front* the aim is the annihilation of the enemy forces in the triangle Kremen-chug-Kiev-Konotop by the forces of Army Group South which are advancing northward across the Dnieper, acting in conjunction with the attack by the southern flank of Army Group Centre. As soon as the completion of this task allows, those formations of 2nd and 6th Armies, and of and Armoured Group, which have become free, will be reformed for the new operation. Beginning about 10th September at latest, the motorized forces of Army Group South, reinforced by infantry divisions, and supported at the main point of attack by 4th Air Fleet, will make a surprise movement from the bridgehead secured by 17th Army north-westwards on and beyond Lubny. At the same time 17th Army is to gain ground in the direction of Poltava and Kharkov.

The offensive against the Crimea from the lower Dnieper will continue, with support from 4th Air Fleet; so will - so far as available forces permit the offensive from the

Dniepropetrovsk bridgehead.<sup>29</sup> An advance by motorized forces south of the lower Dnieper towards Melitopol would be of substantial advantage for the mission of 17th Army.

2. *On the Central front*, the operation against the Timoshenko Army Group will be planned so that the attack can be begun at the earliest possible moment (end of September) with the aim of destroying the enemy forces located in the area east of Smolensk by a pincer movement in the general direction of Vyazma, with strong *concentrations* of armour on the flanks.

For this purpose mobile focal points are to be established with *motorized units* as follows: On the southern flank (probably in the area south-east of Roslavl, the direction of the thrust being north-east), from the available forces of Army Group Centre and 5th and 2nd Armoured Divisions, which will be released for the purpose.

In the Qth Army sector (the thrust being probably towards Bjeloj), by bringing the strongest possible forces from the area of Army Group North. Only when Army Group Timoshenko has been defeated in these highly coordinated and closely encircling operations of annihilation will our central Army be able to begin the advance on Moscow with its right flank on the Oka and its left on the Upper Volga.

The *Air Force* will support the offensive with the 2nd Air Fleet, which will be reinforced at the appropriate time, especially from the north-east area. It will concentrate on the flanks and will employ the bulk of its dive-bomber units (VIII Air Corps) in support of the motorized forces on both flanks. 3. On the *North-eastern front*, in conjunction with the Finnish Corps attacking on the Karelian peninsula, we must (after the capture of Schlusselfburg) so surround the enemy forces fighting in the Leningrad area that by 15th September at the latest substantial units of the motorized forces and of 1st Air Fleet, especially VIII Air Corps, will be available for service on the Central front. Before this, efforts will be made to encircle Leningrad more closely, in particular in the east, and, should weather permit, a large-scale air attack on Leningrad will be carried out. It is particularly important in this connexion to destroy the water supply.

In order to assist the Finnish advance beyond the fortifications along the old Russo-Finnish frontier, as well as to narrow the battle area and eliminate enemy air bases, forces of Army Group North will move north across the Neva sector as soon as possible.

With Finnish cooperation, the Bay of Kronstadt will be so completely closed by mine-laying and artillery that enemy forces will be unable to escape into the Baltic to Hangö and the Baltic Islands.

As soon as the necessary forces can be made available, the battle area around Leningrad is to be covered to the eastward and on the lower Volkhov. The link-up with the Karelian Army on the Svir will only take place when the destruction of the enemy around Leningrad is assured. 4. As regards *further operations* it is intended that the offensive towards Moscow by Army Group Centre should be covered by a flank guard composed of available motorized

forces in the Army Group South sector and advancing in a general northeasterly direction, and that forces from Army Group North should be moved forward on both sides of Lake Ilmen to cover the northern flank and to maintain contact with the Finnish Karelian Army.

5. Any saving of time and consequent advance of the timetable will be to the advantage of the whole operation and its preparation.

*signed:* adolf hitler

### ***Directive No 36***

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Führer Headquarters, 22nd September 1941.

12 copies

### ***Directive No. 36***

I. Owing to unusual difficulties of the terrain, defective lines of communications, and the continual arrival of Russian reinforcements in Karelia and Lapland, the weak forces of Army High Command Norway and 5th Air Fleet have not so far succeeded, in spite of immense efforts and the bravest actions, in reaching the Murmansk railway. The interruption by the enemy of our sea communications along the Arctic coast has still further reduced the likelihood that the Mountain Corps will reach Murmansk this year. We



have, however, succeeded in tying down strong enemy forces and in drawing them away from the main Russian front, in driving back the enemy across the former Finnish frontier at all points, and in eliminating, so far, all threats to North Finland, and above all to the nickel mines. II. The ultimate aim of our operations in Northern and Central Finland remains constant. It is to destroy the enemy forces around Murmansk and along the Murmansk railway.

The importance of this area lies in the nickel mines which are vital for the German war effort. The enemy realizes this importance. It is likely that the English will deploy strong air forces around Murmansk and Kandalaksha and may perhaps even commit Canadian or Norwegian troops there, and that they will send as much war material as possible to Murmansk. We must expect air attacks, even in winter, against the nickel mines and the homes of the miners. Our own efforts must correspond with the greatness of this danger.

III. I therefore order as follows:

1. *Army High Command Norway.*

(a) The attacks in the sector of III (Finnish) Army Corps will be halted and the forces thus released transferred to XXXVI Army Corps.

(b) All preparations are to be made by XXXVI Army Corps for resumption of the attack towards Kandalaksha in the first half of October with the aim of at least cutting Murmansk off from its rail communications by the time winter sets in. Moreover, the question whether the continuation of this attack in the winter will have greater prospects of success than in the autumn is to be considered.

The Finnish High Command will be requested to transfer 163rd Division, by rail via Rovaniemi, to the High Command of the Army at the proper time.

(c) The offensive of the *Mountain Corps* towards Murmansk is to be halted for the time being and the northern flank will advance only so far as is required to improve the position and to mislead the enemy. On the other hand it is necessary, in the light of the tasks assigned to the Navy, at least to occupy the western end of the Fisherman's Peninsula<sup>30</sup> before the beginning of the winter and thereby to prevent the enemy from hampering access to the port of Liinahamari by artillery and motor torpedo boats. The collection of intelligence and planning for this attack will begin at once and the result will be reported as soon as possible. Special weapons suitable for use against targets on land and at sea, which are still lacking, will be provided.

Whether the plan of Army High Command Norway for the winter can be carried out can only be decided later. This plan is to leave two reinforced mountain divisions in the Petsamo area and to allow 2nd Mountain Division to rest in the Rovaniemi area. If possible this will be done. It is also planned to relieve 3rd Mountain Division by sth Mountain Division or by a newly raised mountain division.

(d) Numbers of lorries will be bought or hired in Sweden in order to shift the supply route of the Mountain Corps to the Arctic Highway. If this transport is not sufficient, reinforcements will be brought from home. (e) I have instructed Reichsminister Dr Todt to construct a field railway from Rovaniemi along the Arctic Highway to Petsamo by the ruthless employment of Russian prisoners of war.

(f) For the resumption of the attack on Murmansk, all modern weapons suitable for use in the tundra will be supplied.

2. *Navy:*

It is the task of the Navy to attack enemy supplies moving to Murmansk even in winter,

and particularly at times when air operations are more or less crippled.

For this purpose a suitable subsidiary *base* for light naval forces will be established - preferably in Petsamo Bay - in case we succeed in capturing the western part of the Fisherman's Peninsula. The flow of supplies by sea to Kirkenes and Petsamo, even should it be interrupted for a time, must be constantly attempted.

Coastal defences in the bays of Petsamo and Kirkenes will be strengthened so that they are capable of meeting attacks even by heavy enemy ships. 3. *Air Force*:

It is of decisive importance that 5th Air Fleet should remain in North Norway with strong forces suitable for action in winter.

These forces are to be large enough to give effective support to the attack on Kandalaksha and the capture of the western part of the Fisherman's Peninsula up to the beginning of the bad weather. Meanwhile it is necessary to make continuous 'attacks on the enemy's shipping and rear communications as well as his supply and equipment depots.

These attacks are to be continued throughout the period of bad weather whenever opportunity offers and to be extended particularly to shipping and bases under construction.

Air Force ground establishments must therefore remain, as far as possible, in Northern Norway and Finland and must be protected against the winter by all possible means.

Protection against enemy air attack of our own camps and communications and, above all, of the nickel mines and the naval base which is to be established must be ensured.

Ground organizations and supplies will be increased so that, when the time comes, the resumption of the attack on Murmansk can be supported by considerably stronger air forces than hitherto.

*signed: adolf hitler*

### **Directive No 37**

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces .

Führer Headquarters, 10th October 1941.

13 copies *Directive No. 37*

The sudden favourable developments of the situation in the Eastern theatre, together with reports from Army High Command Norway on the state of the forces there and on the possibilities of further operations in Finland, have led me to issue the following orders:

i. After the defeat or destruction of the main Russian forces in the principal theatre of operations, there will be no compelling reason to tie down Russian forces in Finland by continued attacks. The strength and offensive power of the available German formations are inadequate, in view of the lateness of the season, to capture Murmansk or the Fisherman's Peninsula or to cut the Murmansk railway in Central Finland before the onset of winter.

The *most important task*, therefore, is to hold what we have gained, to protect the Petsamo nickel fields from attack by land, air, or sea, and to make all preparations - beginning while it is still winter - for the final capture of Murmansk, the Fisherman's Peninsula, and the Murmansk railway next year.

The *time-table* will be as follows:

(a) Army formations to go over to the defensive in favourable, easily defended positions. Winter accommodation to be erected and preparations made for winter warfare.

(6) Relief and reinforcement of troops.

(c) In *winter*, a concentric attack against the Murmansk railway, as follows:

With Finnish forces from the south towards Bielo-morsk—Kem and if possible towards Louhi.

With German forces from the Verman sector towards Kandalaksha. (d) At a favourable moment the capture of the Fisherman's Peninsula, if possible in its entirety, and an attack on Murmansk.

These operations must be so timed that it is possible to concentrate all attacking forces at *one point*.

2. *The next duty of Army High Command Norway* will be, while ensuring the defence of all areas which do not call for the employment of large forces, so to distribute forces that those formations which have been heavily engaged for a long time past can rest and be equipped for winter warfare, or, where necessary, be relieved by reinforcements and withdrawn. In this connexion

(a) 2nd and 3rd Mountain Divisions of the *Mountain Corps* will be relieved by the reinforced 6th Mountain Division. One mountain division will remain in Northern Finland, the second will be moved to the Rovaniemi area and south of it. Their transfer home is planned to coincide with the arrival of 5th Mountain Division (about January 1942).

After that, a further mountain division, newly raised or reorganized, will relieve the division which remains in Northern Finland.

(b) i&3rd Infantry Division will come under command of XXXVI Corps as soon as it is clear that it is not required for a concentric attack on the south shore of Lake Ladoga between the Karelian Army and Army Group North. *Personnel* of i6gth and i63rd Infantry Divisions will

if possible be relieved in the course of the winter by divisions from Norway or from home.

3. *All reliefs*, including those of the mountain divisions, will be carried through so as to ensure that the bulk of heavy weapons, equipment, horses, and draught animals remain on the spot. That is to say, only troops and their personal weapons will be exchanged. This will save time and shipping space.

4. *SS Formations*. It is intended to relieve SS 9th Regiment, at present under command of and Mountain Division, by an S S Regiment consisting of Norwegians and Finns and, by reinforcing it with one Austrian S S Regiment, to convert SS Battle Group North into a mountain brigade. The execution of this plan will be coordinated by the High Command of the Armed Forces with the other plans for exchanges of staffs and units. 5. As the Finnish High Command intends to undertake a complete reorganization of the Army on the conclusion of the present operation, the German and Finnish forces in *III Finnish Corps* will be exchanged for one another (6th Finnish Division against SS Battle Group North). It is then proposed to bring the sector held by HI Finnish Corps under the command of Field Marshal Mannerheim.

Field Marshal Mannerheim will be requested to place at least a few small Finnish formations under command of the German Forces attacking Kandalaksha before the beginning of the new operations.

6. The *Air Force* will carry out the following tasks in the Finnish theatre, as far as weather allows:

(a) It will keep the coasts of Northern Norway and Finland under observation to protect our own sea traffic" and to attack that of the enemy. (b) It will provide air defences, particularly for the Petsamo nickel area, ports at which supplies are unloaded, and naval

bases.

(c) It will reconnoitre the area of future operations and will constantly attack the enemy supply base at Murmansk and movements to it by sea or rail. (d) It will make preparations for the employment of stronger forces in support of forthcoming operations.

7. The task of the *Navy* will be to attack enemy supplies going by sea to Murmansk and to protect our own traffic in the Arctic Ocean within the limits of its forces.

To this end light naval forces are to be strengthened as soon as possible and motor torpedo boats to be brought up.

Kirkenes will be developed as a subsidiary base.

In order to protect our own coastal traffic it is desirable to bring up further coastal batteries. The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces will issue the necessary orders. Kirkenes and Petsamo will be reinforced, beyond the establishment already laid down, by one battery each of 21 cm. guns. One 28 cm. battery will be established at Vardo. After the capture of the Fisherman's Peninsula, an extra-heavy battery will be established there.

8. *Cooperation* between Army High Command Norway, Navy, and Air Force must be particularly close in the ensuing months in order to counteract any possible operations against our front or against our sea flank. In order to simplify this cooperation the Navy will appoint a *Naval Commander North* and the Air Force, after withdrawing Headquarters 5th Air Fleet to Norway, will appoint an *Air Force Commander North*.

9. *Operation Orders* will be issued by the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces.<sup>31</sup> Through him there should be submitted to me: (a) By Army High Command Norway: Time-table for regrouping. Plans for re-equipment in order that all troops may be capable of operating in the tundra and in the forests of Eastern Karelia.

Plans for operations and requests for army troops as reinforcements. Proposals for the exchange of staffs. (b) By the Navy and Air Force: Their detailed plans.

10. Where Directive 36 is altered by these orders it becomes invalid. *signed: adolf hitler*

### **Directive No 38**

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Führer Headquarters, 2nd December 1941.

17 copies

### **Directive No. 38**

i. In order to secure and extend our own position in the Mediterranean, and to establish a *focus of Axis strength in Central Mediterranean*, I order, in agreement with the Duce, that part of the German Air Force no longer required in the East be transferred to the South Italian and North African areas, in the strength of about one Air Corps with the necessary anti-aircraft defences.

Apart from the immediate effect of this movement on the war in the Mediterranean and North Africa, efforts will be made to ensure that it has a considerable effect upon further developments in the Mediterranean area as a whole.

2. I appoint Field Marshal *Kesselring* to command all forces employed in these operations. He is also appointed Commander-in-Chief South. His *tasks* are:

To secure mastery of the air and sea in the area between Southern Italy and North Africa in order to secure communications with Libya and Cyrenaica and, in particular, to keep Malta in subjection.

To cooperate with German and allied forces engaged in North Africa. To paralyse enemy

traffic through the Mediterranean and British supplies to Tobruk and Malta, in close cooperation with the German and Italian naval forces available for this task.

3. *Commander-in-Chief South* will be under the orders of the Duce, whose general instructions he will receive through the Commando Supremo. In all Air Force matters Commander-in-Chief Air Force will deal direct with Commander-in-Chief South. In important matters the High Command of the Armed Forces is to be simultaneously informed. 4. *The following will be subordinate to Commander-in-Chief South:* (a) All units of the German Air Force stationed in the Mediterranean and North African areas; (b) the air and anti-aircraft units put at his disposal for the execution of his tasks by the Italian Armed Forces.

5. German *naval forces* in the Central Mediterranean remain under command of Commander-in-Chief Navy.

*For the execution of the tasks assigned to him*, Commander-in-Chief South is authorized to issue directives to the German Admiral with the Italian Naval High Command and, if necessary, to Naval Group South (for the Eastern Mediterranean). Operation orders will be issued by the Naval Headquarters concerned in agreement with Commander-in-Chief South.

Requests by Commander-in-Chief South for combined operations by *allied* naval forces will be made exclusively to the German Admiral with the Italian Naval High Command.

6. The duties of Commander Armed Forces South-east and of the German General at the headquarters of the Italian Armed Forces remain unchanged.

*signed:* adolf hitler

### **Directive No 39**

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces  
Führer Headquarters, 8th December 1941.

14 copies

### **Directive No. 39**

The severe winter weather which has come surprisingly early in the East, and the consequent difficulties in bringing up supplies, compel us to abandon immediately all major offensive operations and to go over to the defensive.

The way in which these defensive operations are to be carried out will be decided in accordance with the purpose which they are intended to serve, viz.:

(a) To hold areas which are of great operational or economic importance to the enemy.  
(b) To enable forces in the East to rest and recuperate as much as possible. (c) Thus to establish conditions suitable for the resumption of large-scale offensive operations in 1942.

My detailed orders are as follows: I. *Army*:

1. The main body of the Army in the East will, as soon as possible, go over to the defensive along a lightly tenable front to be fixed by Commander-in-Chief Army.

Thereafter the rehabilitation of troops is to begin, armoured and motorized divisions being withdrawn first.

2. Where the front has been withdrawn without being forced by the enemy, rear areas will be established in advance which offer troops better living conditions and defensive possibilities than the former positions. To allow the enemy access to important lateral lines of communication can create danger for other sectors of the front not yet fortified. In such



cases the timing of withdrawal in individual sectors must comply with the general situation.

3. The front line must be chosen with an eye to easy quartering and defence and simplification of supply problems, especially during the thaw. Salient and rear positions will be determined and built as quickly as possible, using all available manpower.

4. Within the framework of these generally defensive operations the following *special tasks* must be achieved:

(a) *Sevastopol* will be captured as soon as possible. The future employment of the bulk of nth Army (with the exception of units required for coastal defence) will be decided at the end of the fighting there. (b) In spite of all difficulties, *Army Group South* must endeavour to establish conditions which, in favourable weather, even during the winter, would make it possible to attack and capture the lower Don-Donets line. This would provide favourable conditions for operations against the Caucasus in the spring.

(c) *Army Group North* will shorten its Eastern and South-eastern front north of Lake Ilmen, while still denying the enemy the road and railway from Tikhvin to Volkhovstroï and Kolchanavo. This will make it possible, after the arrival of reinforcements, to clean up the area south of Lake Ladoga. Only thus can Leningrad be finally enclosed and a link with the Finnish Karelian Army be established.

(d) Should it turn out that the enemy has withdrawn his main forces from the *coastal area south of the Bay of Kronstadt*, and no longer intends to defend this area seriously, that coast will be occupied in order to economize our forces.

## II. Air Force:

1. *The task of the Air Force* is to prevent the rehabilitation of the Russian forces by attacking, as far as possible, equipment and training centres, particularly Leningrad, Moscow, Rybinsk, Gorki, Voronezh, Rostov, Stalingrad, Krasnodar, etc. It is particularly important to harass, day by day, those enemy lines of communication which enable him to exist and by which he threatens our own front. Besides engaging the enemy Air Force, the German Air Force will support the Army by all available means in defence against enemy attacks on the ground and in the air.

2. I approve of the proposed distribution of planes between the Army Groups and of the proposed strength of the air forces which will remain in the East. On the conclusion of land operations, individual air units may be withdrawn for rest and training as the situation allows.

3. In order to offer effective defence against possible attacks during the winter and in view of our own forthcoming winter operations (see I. 4), a ground organization will be maintained which allows for a quick switch of forces and for reinforcement by units in the rear. To this end rest areas will be set up as close to the Eastern front as possible.

4. Continual wide-ranging protective air reconnaissance is particularly important in order to detect and observe enemy re-grouping. The Army and Air Force must coordinate their forces and their operations for this purpose.

5. I reserve to myself the right to authorize the withdrawal from the Moscow front of those forces still allocated for service with Commander-in-Chief South.

6. The Air Defence will be responsible for the protection of our own troops in their billeting and supply areas and for the defence of important communications in the rear. Plans will be made for the speedy concentration of our own fighter forces in special areas, in order to deal with concentrated enemy air attacks.

III. The Navy will ensure that the sea-route to Helsinki, rendered safer by the capture of Hango and Osmussaar, can be fully utilized for cargo traffic and supplies to our troops in Finland.

The number of small supply ships being built in Germany and occupied countries (particularly for use across the Black Sea and in the Aegean) must be still further increased even at the expense of all not absolutely essential claims and security measures.

IV. The *replacement of personnel* of the Armed Forces for 1942 must be ensured even in the event of heavy casualties. As the Glass of 1922 will not be sufficient alone for this purpose, drastic steps are necessary. I therefore order:

1. All Armed Forces troops which can be released from Germany or from special employment (e.g. Military Mission Rumania) will be made available, by wholesale redeployment, to the fighting front.

Younger soldiers who are serving at home or in rear areas will take the place of older fighting soldiers.

2. The movement of forces between the Eastern and Western theatres will be made on the following principles:

Divisions of the second and third wave and armoured divisions in the West, if fully fit for action, will relieve divisions in the East which have been exhausted by particularly heavy fighting. We are justified in risking a purely temporary weakening of our forces in France during the winter. Battle-trying officers, non-commissioned officers, and men from the divisions in the East which are to be relieved may be posted to these divisions in the West. Beyond this I will decide whether divisions in the West which cannot be employed in the East as full formations should be disbanded and employed to reinforce seasoned divisions on the Eastern front. This decision will be reached when the Army's general plans for reorganization and regrouping are submitted to me.

At all events the strength of the Army in the West must be maintained so that it is capable of coastal defence and of carrying out 'Undertaking Attila'.

#### **Directive No 40**

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Führer Headquarters, 23rd March 1942.

35 copies

#### **Directive No. 40 Ref, Competence of Commanders in coastal areas.**

##### *I. General Considerations:*

*The coastline of Europe will, in the coming months, be exposed to the danger of an enemy landing in force.*

*The time and place of the landing operations* will not be dictated to the enemy by operational considerations alone. Failure in other theatres of war, obligations to allies, and political considerations may persuade him to take decisions which appear unlikely from a purely military point of view. Even enemy *landings with limited objectives* can interfere seriously with our own plans if they result in the enemy gaining any kind of foothold on the coast. They can interrupt our coastal sea traffic, and pin down strong forces of our Army and Air Force, which will therefore have to be withdrawn from areas of crucial importance. It would be particularly dangerous should the enemy succeed in capturing our airfields or in establishing his own in areas which he has occupied.

The many important military and industrial establishments on the coast or in its

neighbourhood, some of them equipped with particularly valuable plant, may moreover tempt the enemy *to undertake surprise attacks of a local nature*.

Particular attention must be paid to English *preparation for landings on the open coast*, for which they have at their disposal many armoured landing craft, built to carry armoured fighting vehicles and heavy weapons. The possibility of *parachute and airborne attacks* on a large scale must also be envisaged.

## II. *General operational instructions for coastal defence:*

1. *Coastal defence is a task for all Armed Forces*, calling for particularly close and complete cooperation by all units.

2. The intelligence service, as well as the day-to-day reconnaissance by the *Navy and the Air Force*, must strive to obtain early information of enemy *readiness and approach preparations* for a landing operation. All suitable sea and air forces will then concentrate on enemy points of embarkation and convoys, with the aim of destroying the enemy as far from the coast as possible.

It is however possible that the enemy, by skilful camouflage and by taking advantage of unpredictable weather conditions, may achieve a completely surprise attack. *All troops* who may be exposed to such surprise attacks must be in *a state of permanent readiness*. One of the most important duties of Commanding Officers will be to overcome the lack of vigilance among the troops which, as experience has shown, increases with the passage of time.

3. *In defending the coast* and this includes *coastal waters* within range of medium coastal artillery *responsibility for the planning and implementation of defensive measures* must, as recent battle experience dictates, lie unequivocally and unreservedly in the hands of a single Commander. The Commander responsible must make use of all available forces and weapons of the branches of the Armed Forces, of organizations and units outside the Armed Forces, and of our civil headquarters in the area, for the destruction of enemy transports and landing forces. He will use them so that the attack collapses *if possible before it can reach the coast, at the latest on the coast itself*.

Enemy forces which have landed must be destroyed or thrown back into the sea by immediate counter-attack. All personnel bearing arms - irrespective to which branch of the Armed Forces or to which non-service organization they may belong - will be employed for this. Moreover, the required working capacity of the naval shore supply establishments must be guaranteed, in so far as they are not involved in the land fighting themselves. The same applies to the readiness for action of the Air Force ground staff and the anti-aircraft defence of airfields.

No headquarters or formation is to initiate withdrawal in such circumstances. All German troops stationed on or near the coast must be armed and trained for battle.

The enemy must be prevented from securing a foothold on all islands which could present a threat to the mainland or coastal shipping.

4. *The distribution of forces and the extension of defensive works* must be so carried out that our strongest defence points are situated in those sectors most likely to be chosen by the enemy for landings (fortified areas). Other coastal sectors which may be threatened by small-scale surprise attacks will be defended by a series of strong-points, supported if possible by the coastal batteries. All military and industrial plant of importance to the war effort will be included within these strong-points.

The same principles will apply to off-shore islands.

Less threatened sectors will be kept under observation.

5. *The division of the coast into sectors* will be decided by the three services in mutual agreement, or, should the situation demand it, by the responsible Commander (referred to here in paragraph III, i), whose decision will be final.

6. *The fortified areas and strong-points* must be able, by proper distribution of forces, by completion of all-round defence, and by their supply situation, to hold out for some time even against superior enemy forces. Fortified areas and strong-points will be defended to the last man. They must never be forced to surrender from lack of ammunition, rations, or water.

7. The responsible Commander (referred to here in paragraph III, i) will issue orders for keeping the coast under constant observation, and ensure that reconnaissance reports from all services are quickly evaluated, coordinated, and transmitted to the headquarters and civilian authorities concerned.

As soon as there is any evidence that an operation by the enemy is imminent, the Commander is authorized to issue the necessary instructions for coordinated and complementary reconnaissance on sea and land. 8. There can be no question of peacetime privileges for any headquarters or formation of the Armed Forces in coastal areas, or for non-military organizations and units. Their accommodation, security precautions, equipment, immediate readiness for action, and the use they make of the terrain, will be entirely dependent upon the necessity of meeting any enemy attack as swiftly and in as great strength as possible. 'Where the military situation requires it, the civilian population will be immediately evacuated.

### III. *Competence of Commanders.*

1. The following are responsible for the preparation and execution of coastal defence in the *areas under German Command*:

(a) In the Eastern area of operations (excluding Finland): The Army Commanders appointed by High Command of the Army.

(b) In the coastal area of Army High Command Lapland: Commander-in-Chief Army High Command Lapland.

(c) In Norway: Commander Armed Forces Norway.

(d) In Denmark: The Commander of German troops in Denmark.

(e) In the occupied Western territories (including the Netherlands): Commander-in-Chief West. For coastal defence the responsible Commanders in (d) and (e) will be directly subordinate to the High Command of the Armed Forces.

(f) In the Balkans (including the occupied islands): Commander Armed Forces South-east.

(g) In the Baltic territories and the Ukraine: Commander Armed Forces Baltic Territories and

Ukraine. (h) In the Home theatre of war: the Commanding Admirals. 2. The Commanders named in paragraph III, I will have for these *tasks full powers of command* over the staffs commanding all Armed Forces, the German civil authorities, and the non-military units and organizations in their area.

In exercising their authority they will issue the necessary tactical, administrative, and supply instructions, and will ensure that they are complied with. In all matters relating to

land fighting, training of units will follow their ruling, and all necessary information will be put at their disposal. 3. Among the orders to be given and measures to be taken, the following must *be given first place*.

(a) The inclusion within fortified areas or strong-points of all important military and industrial establishments connected with defence, particularly those of the Navy (submarine bases) and the Air Force.

(b) The coordination of coastal reconnaissance.

(c) The defence of fortified areas and strong-points by infantry. (d) The defence by infantry of all isolated positions outside the fortified areas and strong-points— *e.g. coastal look-out points and air-attack warning-posts*.

(e) Artillery defence against land targets. (The Navy has priority in the installation of new batteries, or the conversion of existing batteries.) (f) The defensive readiness, development, and supply facilities of installations, as well as of isolated positions away from these installations. (This includes being equipped with all weapons needed for defence: mines, hand-grenades, flame-throwers, barbed-wire, etc.)

(g) The signals network.

(h) Methods for ensuring that troops are always on the alert, and that infantry and gunnery training is being carried out in accordance with the special defence requirements.

4. *The same authority is conferred upon local commanders up to sector commanders*, in so far as they are responsible for the defence of a part of the coast.

The Commanders designated in paragraph III, i will, in general, appoint Commanders of *Army Divisions* employed in coastal defence as local Commanders with full powers. In Crete the 'Fortress Commandant Crete' will appoint them.

As far as their other duties allow, local Commandants or Commanders of the Air Force and Navy will be made responsible for the general defence of individual sectors or sub-sectors, particularly Air and Naval strong-points. 5. *All naval and air units employed in strategic warfare* are subordinate to the Navy or Air Force. In the event of enemy attacks on the coast, however, they are required to comply, in so far as tactical considerations allow, with the orders of the Commanders responsible for defence. They must therefore be included in the distribution of such information as they require for their duties, and close liaison will be maintained with their headquarters.

IV. *Special duties of the branches of the Armed Forces in the field of coastal defence.*

1. *Navy.*

(a) Organization and protection of coastal traffic.

(b) Training and employment of all coastal artillery against targets at sea. (c) Employment of naval forces.

2. *Air Force.*

(a) Air defence of coastal areas. The use against enemy landings of suitable and available anti-aircraft guns, under the orders of the commander responsible for local defence, will not be affected.

(b) The completion of ground organizations and their protection against air attack and surprise attack by land; the latter in cases where airfields are not included in the coastal defences and are therefore insufficiently protected.

(c) Operational employment of air forces. Attention will be paid to the duplication of command implied by these special duties.

V. Orders and instructions which run contrary to this directive are cancelled from 1st April



1942.

New operation orders, which will be issued by Commanders on the basis of my directive, are to be submitted to me through the High Command of the Armed Forces.

*signed: adolf hitler*

### **Directive No 41**

The Führer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Führer Headquarters, 5th April 1942.

14 copies

### **Directive No. 41**

The winter battle in Russia is nearing its end. Thanks to the unequalled courage and self-sacrificing devotion of our soldiers on the Eastern front, German arms have achieved a great defensive success.

The enemy has suffered severe losses in men and material. In an effort to exploit what appeared to him to be early successes, he has expended during the winter the bulk of reserves intended for later operations. As soon as the weather and the state of the terrain allows, we must seize the initiative again, and through the superiority of German leadership and the German soldier force our will upon the enemy.

Our aim is to wipe out the entire defence potential remaining to the Soviets, and to cut them off, as far as possible, from their most important centres of war industry.

All available forces, German and allied, will be employed in this task. At the same time, the security of occupied territories in Western and Northern Europe, *especially along the coast*, will be ensured in all circumstances.

#### **I. General Plan**

In pursuit of the original plan for the Eastern campaign, the armies of the Central sector will stand fast, those in the *North* will capture Leningrad and link up with the Finns, while those on the *southern flank* will break through into the Caucasus.

In view of conditions prevailing at the end of winter, the availability of troops and resources, and transport problems, these aims can be achieved only one at a time.

First, therefore, all available forces will be concentrated on the *main operations in the Southern sector*, with the aim of

destroying the enemy before the Don, in order to secure the Caucasian oilfields and the passes through the Caucasus mountains themselves. The final encirclement of Leningrad and the occupation of Ingermanland may be undertaken as soon as conditions in that area permit, or sufficient forces can be made available from other theatres.

#### **II. Conduct of operations**

A. *The first task* of the Army and Air Force, when the period of thaw with its muddy ground conditions is over, will be to establish the preliminary conditions for carrying out our main operation.

This calls for *mopping-up and consolidation on the whole Eastern front* and in the rear areas so that the greatest possible forces may be released for the main operation. The other sectors of the front must be able to meet any attack with the smallest possible expenditure of manpower. Wherever, for this purpose, *offensive operations with limited objectives* are to be carried out, in accordance with my orders, every effort will be made to ensure that all available forces of the Army and Air Force are ready to go into action in overwhelming strength, in order to achieve rapid and decisive success. Only thus shall we be able, even before the beginning of the big spring offensive, to make our troops confident in the

certainty of victory, and to instil into the enemy a sense of his own hopeless inferiority. B. The next task will be a mopping-up operation in the *Kerch peninsula on the Crimea* and the capture of *Sevastopol*. The Air Force, and later the Navy, will have the task of preparing these operations, and hindering enemy supply traffic in the Black Sea and the Kerch Straits as energetically as possible.

In the *Southern area*, the enemy forces which have broken through on both sides of *Izyum* will be cut off along the course of the Donets river and destroyed.

Final decision concerning the mopping-up still necessary in the *Central and Northern sectors* of the Eastern front must await conclusion of the present fighting and of the muddy season. The necessary forces, however, must be provided, as soon as the situation allows, by thinning out frontline troops.

G. *The main operation on the Eastern front.*

The purpose is, as already stated, to occupy the Caucasus front by decisively attacking and destroying Russian forces stationed in the Voronezh area to the south, west, or north of the Don. Because of the manner in which the available formations must be brought up, this operation can be carried out in a series of consecutive, but coordinated and complementary, attacks. Therefore these attacks must be so synchronized from north to south that each individual offensive is carried out by the largest possible concentration of army, and particularly of air, forces which can be assured at the decisive points.

Experience has sufficiently shown that the Russians are not very vulnerable to operational encircling movements. It is therefore of decisive importance that, as in the double battle of Vyazma-Bryansk, individual breaches of the front should take the form of close pincer movements.

*We must avoid* closing the pincers too late, thus giving the enemy the possibility of avoiding destruction.

*It must not happen* that, by advancing too quickly and too far, armoured and motorized formations lose connexion with the infantry following them; or that they lose the opportunity of supporting the hard-pressed, forward-fighting infantry by direct attacks on the rear of the encircled Russian armies.

Therefore, apart from the main object of the operation, in each individual case, we must be absolutely sure to annihilate the enemy by the method of attack and by the direction of the forces used.

The general operation will begin with an overall attack and, if possible, a breakthrough from the area south of Orel in the direction of Voronezh. Of the two armoured and motorized formations forming the pincers, the *northern* will be in greater strength than the southern. The object of this breakthrough is the capture of Voronezh itself. While certain infantry divisions will immediately establish a strong defensive front between the Orel area, from which the attack will be launched, and Voronezh, armoured and motorized formations are to continue the attack south from Voronezh, with their left flank on the River Don, in support of a second breakthrough to take place towards the east, from the general area of Kharkov. Here too the primary objective is not simply to break the Russian front but, in cooperation with the motorized forces thrusting down the Don, to destroy the enemy armies.

The third attack in the course of these operations will be so conducted that formations thrusting down the Don can link up in the Stalingrad area with forces advancing from the Taganrog-Artelnovsk area between the lower waters of the Don and Voroshilovgrad across

the Donets to the east. These forces should finally establish contact with the armoured forces advancing on Stalingrad.

Should opportunities arise during these operations, particularly by the capture of undemolished bridges, to establish bridgeheads to the east or south of the Don, advantage will be taken of them. In any event, every effort will be made to reach Stalingrad itself, or at least to bring the city under fire from heavy artillery so that it may no longer be of any use as an industrial or communications centre.

It would be particularly desirable if we could secure either undamaged bridges in Rostov itself or other bridgeheads south of the Don for later operations.

In order to prevent large numbers of Russian forces north of the Don from escaping southwards across the river, it is important that the right flank of our forces advancing east from the Taganrog area should be strengthened by armoured and motorized troops. These will, if necessary, be formed from improvised units.

According to the progress made in these attacks, we must not only provide strong protection for the north-east flank of the operation; we must immediately set about establishing positions along the Don. In this matter, antitank defences are especially important. These positions will from the first be prepared with a view to their eventual occupation in winter, for which they will be fully equipped.

In the first instance, units of our allies will be used to hold the Don. front, which will become longer and longer as the attack proceeds. German forces will provide a strong supporting force between Orel and the Don, and in the Stalingrad strip. For the rest, individual German divisions will also remain available as reserves behind the Don front. Allied troops will be mainly disposed so that the Hungarians are farthest north, then the Italians, and the Rumanians furthest to the south-east. D. *The swift progress of the movements* across the Don to the south, in order to attain the operational objectives, is essential, in consideration of the season.

### III. *Air Force.*

Apart from giving direct support to the Army, the task of the Air Force will be to cover the deployment of forces in the Army Group South area *by strengthening air defences*. This applies particularly to railway bridges across the Dnieper.

If *enemy forces are seen to be concentrating*, the principal roads and railways serving the concentration area will be brought under continuous attack well in the enemy's rear. A first priority will be the destruction of railway bridges across the Don.

At the opening of operations, the *enemy Air Force* and its ground organization in the theatre of operations will be attacked and destroyed by a concentrated effort of all available forces.

The possibility of a *hasty transfer of Air Force units* to the Central and Northern fronts must be borne in mind, and the necessary ground organization for this maintained as far as possible.

### IV. *Navy.*

In the *Black Sea* it is the principal duty of the Navy, in so far as our combat and escort forces and our tonnage allow, to assist in supplying the Army and Air Force by sea.

Because the battle potential of the Russian Black Sea fleet is still unbroken it is particularly important that the light naval forces to be moved to the Black Sea should be ready for action there as soon as possible. The Baltic will be protected by blockading Russian naval forces in the inner waters of the Gulf of Finland.

V. My basic order to *ensure secrecy*<sup>32</sup> is once again to be brought to the attention of all staffs concerned in these preparations. In this connexion the attitude to be adopted to our allies will be laid down in special instructions. VI. *The preparations planned by the various branches of the Armed Forces*, and their time-tables, will be notified to me through the High Command of the Armed Forces.

*signed: adolf hitler*

## **Directive No 42**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1942. 6 copies

### **Directive No. 42 Instructions for operations against unoccupied France and the Iberian Peninsula**

(previously known as 'Attila' and 'Isabella')

I. *The development of the situation in unoccupied France*, or in the French possessions in North Africa, may render it necessary in future to occupy the *whole* of French territory. Likewise we must reckon on possible enemy attempts to seize the *Iberian Peninsula*, which will call for immediate counter-measures on our part. II. *Because of the continual shifting of our forces in the West*, and the consequent changes in the readiness for battle of our formations there, *only general principles can be given for carrying out these operations*. Similarly, the situation with regard to manpower and equipment makes it impossible to keep forces and material permanently available for these operations. Therefore the directives already issued for 'Attila' and 'Isabella' are cancelled with immediate effect. *Improvised plans for both operations* will, however, be made so that they can still be carried out at very short notice. III. *Occupation of unoccupied France in cooperation with Italian Forces* (cover name 'Anton' (most secret). Day of commencement of operations, A-day).

i. *The object of the operation* is to break the powers of resistance of unoccupied France and to occupy the country.

It will therefore be the task of the *German forces*, without weakening coastal defence, with quickly formed and very mobile forces, to seize by surprise such objectives as are important for defence, and thus to eliminate the possibility of French resistance. It will be particularly important to seize quickly the larger French garrison towns, railway junctions, dumps of supplies, munitions and arms, airfields, and the seat of the Government, Vichy. It will be the task of *the Italians* to occupy the French Mediterranean coast (and Corsica) and, by blockading naval bases, particularly Toulon, to prevent the French Home Fleet and merchant vessels in Mediterranean ports from passing over to the enemy. The Italians will be supported in this by German naval and air forces in the Mediterranean.

The Italians may also, if the situation requires, have to take action in Tunisia. A force for this purpose is now being formed.

3. *The High Command of the Army (Army Group D)* will make all necessary preparations in view of the forces available.

The special forces required to support the Army in particular tasks (e.g. the occupation of Air Force establishments, the elimination of signals centres, and sabotage) are to be formed by the branches of the Armed Forces and by the departments of the High Command of the Armed Forces, upon request of, and in agreement with, the High Command of the Army. 3. It will be the task of the Air Force to give direct support to

ground operations in France and, in cooperation with the Italians, to eliminate such French air forces as remain in France.

If 12th Air Division and the necessary transport are available, advantage will be taken of all possibilities of airborne landings.

In order that the Air Force may be used for this purpose, the necessary ground organization is to be set up at once in occupied France. IV. *First counter-measures against an enemy assault on the Iberian Peninsula* (cover name 'Ilona' (most secret). Day of crossing the frontier, 1 day).

1. *The first aim of our counter-measures* will be to occupy the southern passes of the Pyrenees and thus establish the conditions necessary for future operations. Any threat to the strategically important ports on the Atlantic Coast of France will be met by securing the harbours on the northern coast of Spain.

2. *Negotiations and preliminary discussions* with the Spanish and other non-German authorities concerning these plans are forbidden. V. *The High Commands of the branches of the Armed Forces* will report by 10th June concerning both operations, as follows:

(a) Proposed strength of forces.

(b) Proposals on general lines for carrying out operations.

(c) Time required before operations can begin.

(d) Demands or requests to the Italians, and possible ways of supporting them (see III, i, sub-section 3).

The necessary discussions with the Italians will then be authorized by the High Command of the Armed Forces.

*signed:* Adolf Hitler

### **Directive No 43**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 11th July 1942.

5 copies

**Directive No. 43 Continuation of operations from the Crimea** 1. After clearing the Kerch peninsula and capturing Sevastopol, *the first*

*task of 11th Army* will be, while ensuring the defence of the Crimea, to make all *preparations* for the main body of the army to cross the Kerch strait by the middle of August at the latest.<sup>33</sup> The aim of this operation will be to thrust forward on either side of the western foothills of the Caucasus in a south-easterly and easterly direction.

The operation will be known by the cover-name 'Blücher' (most secret), and the day of the landing will be known as "B1-day"

2. The operation will *be executed* on the following lines: In accordance with the proposals of 11th Army, the crossing is to be planned so that the strongest possible forces are landed in the rear of enemy coast defences. The high ground north of Novorossiysk will then be captured. The ports of Anapa and Novorossiysk will be occupied, thereby eliminating bases for the enemy fleet.

After that, the operation will continue to the north of the Caucasus, its main thrust in a general easterly direction. In this connexion it is specially important that the Maykop area be quickly occupied. The decision whether small forces should also be landed on the coast road along the Black Sea in the Tuapse area can only later be taken.

For this operation 11th Army is to keep the bulk of the medium and field artillery (flat



trajectory and howitzer) mortar batteries up to 21 cm. mortars inclusive, and some of the heavy projector detachments.

3. *The Navy* will take immediate steps to secure the necessary shipping for the crossing, in accordance with detailed Army requirements. To meet this need, suitable shipping, apart from vessels already available in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and those which may be brought in for the operation, will be chartered or bought from the Bulgarians and Rumanians.

During the actual operation, the Navy will support the landing forces during the crossing, and protect them with all available means against action by enemy sea forces.

Naval units detailed to cover the crossing of the landing forces will come under command of nth Army during the operation.

4. The task of the *Air Force* in preparing the operation is the overall elimination of enemy naval forces and harbours in the Black Sea.

During the operation its task, apart from immediate support of the landing forces, will be to prevent enemy naval forces from interfering with the crossing.

Preparations are to be made so that the Army forces landed on the Temryuk peninsula may be supplied for several days by air.

The possibility of using parachute and airborne troops is to be investigated. If possible, 7th Airborne Division will not be involved in these operations, or at least only in small part. It may be advantageous to employ units of 22nd Infantry Division as airborne troops.

5. The enemy is to be *deceived into believing* that large forces of nth Army are being moved from the Crimea to the area north of the Sea of Azov. For this purpose a large-scale movement by road and rail will be undertaken towards the north, while the actual concentration for 'Undertaking Blücher' will be concealed by night marches.

The High Command of the Armed Forces will support this deception by suitable means.

6. The following *special operations* (*Abwehr II*<sup>34</sup>) have been prepared. These special operations are to be examined by the General Staff of the Army with Foreign Intelligence, Security II [*Abwehr II*], and, if approved, to be included in 'Operation Blücher'.

(a) Parachute drop of a commando detachment in the Maykop area to protect oil installations ('Undertaking Schamil').

(b) Sabotage operations against the triangle of railways Krasnodar-Kropotkin-Tikhoretsk, and against the bridges over the Kuban in that area. (c) Participation of a light engineer company of the Brandenburg Training Regiment, raised for operations of this kind, in attacks on enemy ports and coastal installations.

7. *Details* for the preparation and conduct of the operation will be worked out by the Army General Staff in conjunction with the Navy and Air Force. I am to be informed daily through High Command of the Armed Forces, Operations Staff, on the state of preparations (provision of shipping) and the forces to be used.

*signed: adolf hitler*

## **Directive No 44**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 21st July 1942. 8 copies

## **Directive No. 44 Operations in Northern Finland**

1. The unexpectedly rapid and favourable development of the *operations against the Timoshenko Army Group* entitle us to assume that we may soon succeed in depriving

Soviet Russia of the Caucasus, with her most important source of oil, and of a valuable line of communication for the delivery of English and American supplies.

This, coupled with the loss of the entire Donets industrial area, will strike a blow at the Soviet Union which would have immeasurable consequences. 2. We must now *cut the northern supply route* which links Soviet Russia with the Anglo-Saxon powers. This is principally the *Murmansk railway*, along which by far the largest proportion of supplies from America and England were delivered during the winter months. The importance of this supply route will increase further when the season and weather conditions prevent successful operations against northern convoys.

3. 20th Mountain Army therefore proposes, in cooperation with 5th Air Fleet, to prepare an offensive this autumn *to seize the Murmansk railway near Kandalaksha*.

For this, we can assume

(a) Leningrad will be captured in September at the latest, and Finnish forces thereby released.

(b) 5th Mountain Division will have moved to Finland by the end of September.

The undertaking has been allotted the cover-name of '*Lachsfang* [SalmonTrap]'. Day of attack will be called 'L-day'.

4. It is desirable that the attack by 20th Mountain Army should be coordinated with a *Finnish advance on Belomorsk*.

Liaison Staff North will ascertain the intentions of the Finnish Command for this attack, in conjunction with 20th Mountain Army.

5. *The most important task of 20th Mountain Army* remains the complete protection of the Finnish nickel production.

It must once again be stressed, with the greatest emphasis, that without deliveries of Finnish nickel Germany could probably no longer manufacture the high-grade steel necessary above all for aircraft and submarine engines. This could have decisive effects upon the outcome of the war. 20th Mountain Army must therefore be at all times ready to send reinforcements to Mountain Corps Norway as required for the fulfilment of these tasks.

Similarly, the Air Force 5th Air Fleet will, in the event of an attack upon the nickel mines, renounce all other duties and concentrate on the defence of the area.

6. '*Undertaking Meadowland [Wiesengrund]*'<sup>35</sup> will not

take place this year. Preparations for this operation will, however, continue and be reinforced, so that it can be executed in the spring of 1943 at short notice (about eight weeks).

Particular attention will be paid to the development and strengthening of air and supply bases, because these are essential both for the success of 'Meadowland' and for meeting a major enemy offensive in the north. 7. 20th Mountain Army and Commander-in-Chief Air Force will inform me of their intentions as soon as possible.

Liaison Staffs North will report on Finnish plans for the attack on Belomorsk.

*signed: Adolf Hitler*

## **Directive No 45**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 23rd July 1942. 6 copies

## **Directive No. 45 Continuation of 'Operation Brunswick [Braunschweig]' <sup>36</sup>**

I. In a campaign which has lasted little more than three weeks, the broad objectives outlined by me for the southern flank of the Eastern front have been largely achieved. Only weak enemy forces from the Timoshenko Army Group have succeeded in avoiding encirclement and reaching the further bank of the Don. We must expect them to be reinforced from the Caucasus.

A further concentration of enemy forces is taking place in the Stalingrad area, which the enemy will probably defend tenaciously.

### *II. Aims of future operations.*

#### *A. Army.*

1. The next task of Army Group A is to encircle enemy forces which have escaped across the Don in the area south and south-east of Rostov, and to destroy them.

For this purpose strong fast-moving forces are to move from the bridgeheads which will be established in the Konstantinovskaia-Tsymlyanskaya area, in a general southwesterly direction towards Tikhoretsk. Infantry, light infantry, and mountain divisions will cross the Don in the Rostov area.

In addition, the task of cutting the Tikhoretsk-Stalingrad railway line with advanced spearheads remains unchanged.

Two armoured formations of Army Group A (including 24th Armoured Division) will come under command of Army Group B for further operations south-eastwards.

Infantry division 'Greater Germany [*Grossdeutschland*]' is not to advance beyond the Manych sector.<sup>37</sup> Preparations will be made to move it to the west.

2. *After the destruction of enemy forces south of the Don*, the most important task of Army Group A will be to occupy the entire eastern coastline of the Black Sea, thereby eliminating the Black Sea ports and the enemy Black Sea fleet.

For this purpose the formations of 11th Army already designated (Rumanian Mountain Corps) will be brought across the Kerch Straits as soon as the advance of the main body of Army Group A becomes effective, and will then push south-east along the Black Sea coastal road.

A *further force* composed of all remaining mountain and light infantry divisions will force a passage of the Kuban, and occupy the high ground around Maykop and Armavir.

In the further advance of this force, reinforced at a suitable time by mountain units, towards and across the western part of the Caucasus, all practical passes are to be used, so that the Black Sea coast may be occupied in conjunction with 11th Army.

3. *At the same time* a force composed chiefly of fast-moving formations will give flank cover in the east and capture the Grozny area. Detachments will block the military road between Osetia and Grozny, if possible at the top of the passes.

Thereafter the Baku area will be occupied by a thrust along the Caspian coast.

The Army Group may expect the subsequent arrival of the Italian Alpine Corps.

These operations by Army Group A will be known by the cover name '*Edelweiss*'.

Security: Most Secret.

4. The task of Army Group B is, as previously laid down, to develop the Don defences and, by a thrust forward to Stalingrad, to smash the enemy forces concentrated there, to occupy the town, and to block the land communications between the Don and the Volga as well as the Don itself. Closely connected with this, fast-moving forces will advance along

the Volga with the task of thrusting through to Astrakhan and blocking the main course of the Volga in the same way.

These operations by Army Group B will be known by the cover-name 'Heron [*Fischreiher*]'. Security: Most Secret.

#### B. Air Force.

*The task of the Air Force* is, primarily, to give strong support to the land forces crossing the Don, and to the advance of the eastern group along the railway to Tikhoretsk, and to concentrate its forces on the destruction of the Timoshenko Army Group.

In addition, the operations of Army Group B against Stalingrad and the western part of Astrakhan will be supported. The early destruction of the city of Stalingrad is especially important. Attacks will also be made, as opportunity affords, on Astrakhan. Shipping on the Lower Volga should be harassed by mine-laying.

*During further operations* the Air Force is to concentrate on cooperating with the forces advancing on the Black Sea ports, and, apart from giving direct support to the Army, to assist the Navy in preventing enemy naval forces from interfering.

Secondly, sufficient forces must be allocated to cooperate with the thrust on Baku via Groznyy.

In view of *the decisive importance of the Caucasus oilfields* for the further prosecution of the war, air attacks against their refineries and storage tanks, and against ports used for oil shipments on the Black Sea, will only be carried out if the operations of the Army make them absolutely essential. But in order to block enemy supplies of oil from the Caucasus as soon as possible, it is especially important to cut the railways and pipelines still being used for this purpose and to harass shipping on the Caspian at an early date.

#### C. Navy.

It will be the task of the Navy, besides giving direct support to the Army in the crossing of the Kerch Straits, to harass enemy sea action against our coastal operations with all the forces available in the Black Sea. To facilitate Army Supply, some naval ferries will be brought "through the Kerch Straits to the Don, as soon as possible.

In addition, Commander-in-Chief Navy will make preparation for transferring light forces to the Caspian Sea to harass enemy shipping (oil tankers and communications with the Anglo-Saxons in Iran).

III. The local operations now being prepared *in the Central and Northern Army Group* areas should be carried out as far as possible in quick succession. Their result must be the maximum disruption and disintegration of enemy commands and forces.

Army Group North is preparing to capture Leningrad by the beginning of September.

Cover-name: 'Fire Magic' (*Feuerzauber*)<sup>38</sup> For this, they will be reinforced by five divisions from nth Army, by heavy and extra-heavy artillery and by such other Army troops as may be necessary.

Two German and two Rumanian divisions will remain in the Crimea for the present. 22nd Division, as already ordered, will revert to Commander Armed Forces Southeast.

IV. In handling and re-transmitting this Directive and orders arising from it, I draw particular attention to my order on *secrecy* of 12th August. *signed: Adolf Hitler*

#### **Directive No 46**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 18th August 1943.

30 copies

## Directive No. 46 Instructions for intensified action against banditry in the East

### A. General Considerations

I. In recent months *banditry in the East* has assumed intolerable proportions, and threatens to become a serious danger to supplies for the front and to the economic exploitation of the country.

By the beginning of winter these bandit gangs must be substantially exterminated, so that order may be restored behind the Eastern front and severe disadvantages to our winter operations avoided.

The following measures are necessary:

1. Rapid, drastic, and active operations against the bandits by the coordination of all available forces of the Armed Forces, the S S, and Police which are suitable for the purpose.

2. The concentration of all propaganda, economic, and political measures on the necessity of combating banditry.

II. The *following general principles* will be borne in mind by all concerned in formulating military, police, and economic measures:

1. The fight against banditry is as much *a matter of strategy* as the fight against the enemy at the front. It will therefore be organized and carried out by the same staffs.

2. The destruction of the bandits calls for *active operations and the most rigorous measures* against all members of gangs or those guilty of supporting them. Operation orders for action against bandits will follow. 3. The confidence of the local population in German authority must be gained by *handling them strictly but justly*.

4. A necessary condition for the destruction of bandit gangs is *the assurance to the local population of the minimum requirements of life*. Should this fail, or - what is particularly important - should available supplies not be fairly distributed, the result will be that more recruits will join the bandits.

5. In this struggle against the bandits the *cooperation of the local population* is indispensable. Deserving persons should not be parsimoniously treated; rewards should be really attractive. On the other hand, reprisals for action in support of the bandits must be all the more severe. 6. *Misplaced confidence in the native population*, particularly in those working for the German authorities, must be strictly guarded against. Even though the majority of the population is opposed to the bandits, there are always spies to be reckoned with, whose task is to inform the bandits of all action contemplated against them.

### B. Command and responsibility

#### i. *The Reichsführer SS and the Chief of the German Police* <sup>39</sup>

The Reichsführer S S and Chief of the German Police is the central authority for the collection and evaluation of all information concerning action against bandits.

In addition, the Reichsführer S S has the sole responsibility for combating banditry in the *Reich Commissioners' territories*. Commanders of the Armed Forces will support him in his tasks arising from this by coordinating their measures, and by transferring such' staffs, command communications, and supplies as are needed. In so far as is allowed by military security duties, which will be carried out locally as actively as possible, Higher SS and Police Leaders will if necessary assume temporary command of forces of the Armed Forces for use in their operations. The closest liaison between Higher S S and



<sup>40</sup> and Police Leaders and Commanders of the Armed Forces is an essential condition of success.

## 2. Army.

The Chief of the Army General Staff is solely responsible for action against bandits in *operational areas*. In carrying out this task, police units stationed in the area of operations, as well as the Army units engaged, will come under the Army Commanders concerned. The latter will entrust the command of individual operations to Army Commanders, or to Higher SS and Police Leaders, according to the situation,

the forces engaged, and the seniority of the officers concerned. G. *Available Forces*

### 1. *Forces of the Reichsfuhrer SS.*

The Police and S S formations available and allocated for operations against bandits are intended primarily for *active* operations. Their employment in other security duties is to be avoided. Efforts will be made to reinforce Police and S S formations in the East, and to transfer to the threatened areas a considerable number of establishments of the Reichsfuhrer SS at present employed elsewhere. Formations still at the front, but indispensable for operations against bandits in the rear areas, will be withdrawn from the Army as soon as possible, and placed at the disposal of the Reichsfuhrer S S for duty in their proper areas.

### 2. *Army Forces,*

In order to reinforce the garrisons of the vast eastern territories behind the fighting front, I order as follows:

(a) When the General Government<sup>41</sup> becomes a Home Forces area, two reserve divisions will move to the General Government.

(b) A total of five reserve divisions will be moved to the spheres of Commander Armed Forces Baltic Territories and Commander Armed Forces Ukraine by 15th October 1943.

(c) All formations, units, staffs, establishments, and schools of the Field Army not serving under the Commander of the Replacement Army will be withdrawn by 1st October 1942 from the General Government and transferred to the territories of the Reich Commissioners or to the area of operations. Any necessary exceptions will be approved by the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces.

(d) The final target is to transfer by the end of October a replacement force of 50,000 men formed from the Reserve Army.

(e) The necessary operation orders concerning paragraphs (a) to (d) will be issued by the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces. 3. *Air Force.*

Commander-in-Chief Air Force will arrange for the transfer of Air Force establishments to the areas threatened by bandits, in order to reinforce the garrison in the eastern territories.

### 4. *Units formed from the native population.*

Native units made up of local people "who have particularly distinguished themselves in action against the bandits are to be maintained and extended,<sup>42</sup> provided they are completely reliable and are volunteers. They will not take part in fighting at the front, nor will *Imigrh* or members of the former intelligentsia be enrolled in them.

The Army General Staff will issue general directions covering the internal organization of these units, where this has not already been done. In matters of rank, uniforms, and training, these directions will follow the general lines laid down for the Turkoman formations.<sup>43</sup> They will then be approved by the Chief of the High Command of the Armed

Forces. The wearing of German badges of rank, the *Hohetis-abzeichen* [the Eagle and Swastika], and German military shoulder-straps is forbidden. The dependents of these men are to be provided for. Ration scales for them will be laid down corresponding to the duties they are required to perform. These people will receive preferential treatment in the form of grants of land, which should be as liberal as possible within the limits of local circumstances. 5. *Other forces.*

The arming of the Reich Labour Service, railwaymen, foresters, agricultural overseers, etc., will, where required, be improved. They should be able to *defend themselves with the most effective weapons available. There must be no German in the area threatened by bandits who is not engaged actively or passively, in the fight against them.*

*signed: adolf hitler*

### **Directive No 47**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 28th December 1942. 24 copies

### **Directive No. 47 Command and defence measures in the Southeast**

I. The situation in the Mediterranean makes it possible that an attack may be made, in the foreseeable future, on Crete and on German and Italian bases in the Aegean Sea and the Balkan peninsula.

It must be expected that this attack will be supported by risings in the Western Balkan countries.

The increasing influence of the Anglo-Saxon powers on *the attitude of Turkey* also calls for fresh vigilance.

II. As a result of this situation and of developments in North Africa, I transfer the defence of the South-east area, including off-shore islands, to *Commander Armed Forces South-east* who will be directly subordinate to me as Com-mander-in-Chief South-east (Army Group E).

The principles laid down for coastal defence in Directive No. 40 will apply here.

The military forces of our allies will, as far as is necessary, come under direct tactical command of Commander-in-Chief South-east only in the event of enemy attack.

The naval and air forces of our Allies will, in such an event, come under tactical command of the headquarters of the corresponding German services.

This command organization will become effective upon the issue of special orders.

In *preparing* for a defensive battle of this kind, Comman-der-in-Chlef South-east will have the following tasks:

1. *Preparation of coastal defences* with main emphasis in the Dodecanese, Crete, and the Peloponnese, which will be developed as fortresses (with the exception of Mytilene and Chios).

2. The final pacification of the hinterland and the destruction of rebels and bandits of all kinds, in conjunction with Italian 2nd Army.

3. *The preparation of all necessary measures* to meet an enemy attack on the Balkans which is helped or condoned by Turkey. This will be carried out in agreement with the Bulgarian High Command.

In addition, Commander-in-Chief South-east will control in the German sphere *Unified sea transport* and its protection in the Aegean Sea, including Crete.

*Supplies* by land and sea for all German forces stationed in the South-east, in accordance with their requirements and the transport available. *Decisions on all questions* which may arise in the three services concerning the coordinated control of *transport and communications* in the occupied area of the South-east.

### III. *Organization of Command*

#### A. *In the German sphere:*

1. *Commander-in-Chief South-east* is the highest representative of the forces in the South-east, and will exercise full powers in all areas occupied by German troops.

He will supervise the civil administration which has been set up by the various Commanders and by the Commandant of Fortress Crete. Commander Armed Forces South-east will cease to be subordinate to Commander-in-Chief South from 1st January 1943.

2. The following are subordinate to Commander-in-Chief South-east:

(a) In the area of Croatia, "*The German General Plenipotentiary in Croatia*" (apart from his duties as Military Attache), and "*The Commander of German Troops in Croatia*".

(b) In the area of Old Serbia, the '*Commanding General Serbia*'. (c) In the Salonika area, and in the islands of Lemnos, Mytilene, Chios, and Strati, as well as for the neutral zone near Turkey in Thrace, the '*Commander Salonika -Aegean*'.

(d) For the Piraeus port area, the billeting areas, and the area occupied by German troops in Attica, as well as the island of Melos, the '*Commander Southern Greece*'.

(e) For the Crete area, '*the Commandant of Fortress Crete*'. (f) '*The Admiral Aegean*' in all matters concerning coastal defence.

(g) The '*Military Attache in Sofia*', where duties beyond those of an Attache are concerned.

For the Navy, the present distinction between Naval Group South and the German Naval Headquarters in Italy will be retained.

#### 3. *Air Force.*

(a) *Conduct of Air Warfare.*

(i) *The conduct of air operations in the whole Mediterranean area*, with the exception of the French Mediterranean coast, *remains the responsibility of Commander-in-Chief South*. He will receive directives for operations as follows:

(1) In the Central Mediterranean, from the Italian Supreme Command. (ii) In the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkans, from Commander-in-Chief Air Force, in accordance with my instructions. Commander-in-Chief Air Force and Italian Supreme Command will agree upon basic plans for air warfare.

(2) In order to ensure coordinated operations, particularly in coastal defence, and coordinate control in the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan areas, Commander-in-Chief South will appoint a staff to cooperate with Commander-in-Chief South-east for air operations in this area. Its duties will also be to prepare ground establishments in the Balkans and common action with our allies in the case of an enemy attack. (b) *Air Defence.*

(1) Air Defence in the Central Mediterranean is the responsibility of Commander-in-Chief South under the Italian Supreme Command. (2) In the Balkan area air defence is the responsibility of Commander-in-Chief South-east in accordance with the directives of Commander-in-Chief South, thereby assuring that air operations in the Eastern Mediterranean are also under unified command.<sup>44</sup>

B. *Preparations* for action and the pacification of the area will be made in close cooperation with *our allies*. Liaison officers will be exchanged, where this has not already been done.

The following general principles apply:

1. *Italy*:

(a) *Army*: Regulations regarded as necessary for the Italian theatre will be submitted to the High Command of the Armed Forces, who will obtain the agreement of the Italian Supreme Command. The latter will then issue the necessary orders to the Italian armies stationed in the South-east. (b) *Navy*: Orders proposed by Commander-in-Chief Navy Group South for the Italian Admiral in the Dodecanese concerning preparatory measures will be forwarded, in the form of draft orders, by Navy Group South to the Naval Staff, which will obtain the agreement of the Italian Naval High Command for the issue of corresponding orders. The Italian Naval High Command will then issue such orders, after obtaining the approval of the Italian Supreme Command. (c) *Air Force*: Regulations regarded as necessary for the Italian Air Force in the South-east area will be submitted to Commander-in-Chief South, who, after securing the approval of the Italian Supreme Command, will agree on them with the High Command of the Italian Air Force, and will ensure their publication in an order. 2. *Bulgaria*: Every effort will be made to secure a similar procedure with the Bulgarian forces. (The outcome of conversations with the Bulgarians is still awaited.)

3. *Croatia*: Cooperation with Croatia and the employment of the Croatian forces will continue as hitherto. Commander-in-Chief South-east and the German naval and air force commands have the duty to ensure unified defence preparations for the whole South-eastern area, and are entitled to examine all measures directed to this end.

IV. Commander-in-Chief South-east has all *the powers of a territorial commander* over the three branches of the Armed Forces and the WaffenSS in those parts of Croatia, Serbia, and Greece (including the Greek Islands) occupied by German troops.

Areas occupied exclusively by German troops are *operational areas*. Commander-in-Chief South-east will exercise full powers in them through his subordinate commanders. Those parts of Croatia which are occupied by German troops, or in which German troops are operating, will also be regarded as operational areas. In those parts of the *Italian* occupation area in which German troops are stationed, Commander-in-Chief South-east will exercise powers of command over all branches of the

Armed Forces in so far as the military requirements of the German forces demand.

For the delimitation of powers between Commander-in-Chief South-east and '*the Plenipotentiary of the Reich for Greece*' see Appendix.<sup>45</sup> V. Directive No. 31 of 9th June 1941 and OKW/WFSt/Op. No. 551743/43 g. K. Chfs, of 13th October 1942<sup>46</sup> are hereby cancelled.

*signed*: adolf hitler

**Directive No 48**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 26th July, 1943. 17 copies

**Directive No. 48 Command and defence measures in the Southeast**

I. *The enemy's measures in the Eastern Mediterranean*, in conjunction with the attack on Sicily, indicate that he will shortly begin landing operations against our strong line in the

Aegean, Peloponnese-Crete-Rhodes, and against the west coast of Greece with offshore Ionian islands. Should the operations of the enemy extend from Sicily to the mainland of Southern Italy, we must also reckon with an assault on the east coast of the Adriatic, north of the straits of Otranto.

The enemy's conduct of operations is also based on the bandit movement, which is increasingly organized by him in the interior of the South-east area.

Turkey's neutrality is at present beyond question, but needs continuous watching.

II. In view of this situation, *the Command in the Southeastern* area will be rearranged in agreement with our Italian allies on the following general lines:

*A. Army*

1. Commander-in-Chief South-east will assume command of the Italian Army from 00.00 hours 27th July 1943.

2. German formations at present posted, or to be posted, in this Army area will come under tactical command of the Italian Army and of the headquarters designated by it, with the proviso that uniform command of all German and Italian troops in the Peloponnese will be assumed by German LXVIII Army Corps, and that Italian VIII Army Corps will move to the area north of the Corinth canal.

German units directly employed in coastal defence will come under command of the responsible Italian divisions in their sectors.

3. German units temporarily, committed in Albania, Montenegro, and those coastal areas of Croatia under Italian occupation will come under the tactical command of Italian Army Group East or of 2nd Italian Army.

*B. Navy and Air Force.*  
The principles already laid down for exerting influence on our allies through the Navy and Air Force remain in operation. In this connexion Admiral Aegean will ensure that all measures for coastal defence taken by the Navy in the coastal areas occupied by the Italian Army comply with German requirements.

III. *The most important task of Commander-in-Chief Southeast* is to make defensive preparations for the coast of Greece, on the islands and on the mainland. An essential preliminary is to destroy the bandit gangs in Greece, Serbia, and Croatia and thus open up the supply lines, in particular the main railway lines, to ensure to our forces the necessary freedom of movement in rear areas.

In matters of coastal defence, only German plans for manning and development are to be applied, even where Italian formations are concerned. To stiffen the Italians in the most threatened coastal sectors, German Fortification Battalions and, where these do not suffice, units of German divisions held in reserve will be stationed on or near the coast. We must also demand that important Italian coastal batteries and other key points be reinforced by racial Germans.

Where German formations are not strong enough to form an effective operational reserve, Italian units will be brought under German command and interspersed with German units. Airfields near the coast will be defended by German forces.

In the siting and construction of all defensive positions, and in the reconnaissance for movement and concentration of troops, the likelihood of enemy air superiority will be borne in mind.

*In the rear areas* the most urgent task of Commander-in-Chief South-east is to destroy the bandits in Serbia and Croatia, with special emphasis on lines of communication to Greece. Through close cooperation with Italian Army Group East and the 2nd Italian Army, and by

transferring German forces where necessary, we must ensure that operations against the bandits in their areas are also carried out with the utmost intensity; and, in particular, that gangs of bandits near the coast, who could be exceptionally dangerous in the event of an enemy landing, are annihilated. Moreover, the Army Group must be constantly prepared to intervene, with as strong German forces as possible, in order to defend the coast in the Italian area, should the situation so demand. IV. The disposition of forces proposed by Commander-in-Chief South-east in his memo of 26th July 1943 is approved in principle. Details will be the subject of special orders. Orders concerning Army reinforcements will follow.

In addition, it is intended in the next few months to concentrate an operational army along the Belgrade-Larissa railway line. It will consist of: Two Armoured or Armoured Grenadier Divisions Two Mountain Divisions Two Light Infantry Divisions which will be moved from the East. V.

A. 1. Greek territory occupied by German forces and by the 7th Bulgarian Division, including the islands and the neutral zone in Thrace, will be *an operational area*. Commander-in-Chief South-east will exercise full powers in this area, and is authorized to delegate his powers to *Military Commander Greece*.

His powers will be defined by the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces in a special instruction, on the general principle that, as the military situation demands, all non-military German authorities posted, or to be posted, in Greece will be subordinate to Commander-in-Chief Southeast and will be incorporated in the Staff of Military Commander Greece. The authority of senior officials of the Ministries of the Reich for issuing technical instructions is not affected by this: but these instructions will be transmitted through the Military Commander.

2. Pending a final settlement with the Foreign Office, the Plenipotentiary of the Reich accredited to the Greek government is excluded from this arrangement, as is Minister Neubacher, whose special duties and powers remain for the present unchanged. Instructions to the Military Commander will ensure the closest cooperation between him and these authorities. 3. Commander-in-Chief South-east should influence the military administration of the Italian-occupied areas only in so far as the military situation requires. If agreement cannot be reached with local Italian authorities, appropriate application is to be made to the High Command of the Armed Forces.

B. 1. In the Serbian and Croatian area of operations, *Com-mandet'-inChief South-east* will delegate his executive powers to the 'Military Commander South-east', who for this purpose, in Croatia, will make use of the Commander of the German troops in Croatia.

2. The overwhelming importance of Serbia for the entire conduct of the war in the South-east requires that all German authorities should be coordinated. Non-military authorities stationed in Serbia will therefore be subordinate to the Military Commander South-east and incorporated in his staff.

The authority of senior officials of the Ministries of the Reich for issuing technical instructions is not affected by this, but these instructions will be transmitted through the Military Commander.

The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces will issue orders on distribution of duties.

3. The Commander of German troops in Croatia and the German General Plenipotentiary in Croatia will retain their command competences and duties as heretofore.



VI. The Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces will issue, on my behalf, the necessary instructions for the incorporation of staffs and headquarters, and for the provision of supplies.

Regulations not conforming with this directive are cancelled. *signed: adolf hitler*

### **Directive No 49**

### **Directive No 50**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 28th September 1943. 10 copies

### **Directive No. 50 Concerning the preparations for the withdrawal of 20th Mountain Army to Northern Finland and Northern Norway**

1. The situation in the Army Group North sector is completely stabilized, and there is no prospect of a withdrawal on this front. The most dangerously threatened sector operationally, around Velikiye Luki, is being continually reinforced. Nevertheless, a secondary position is now being developed behind Lake Peipus and the Narva, in case of unfavourable developments, particularly in Finland itself.

2. It is our duty to bear in mind the possibility that Finland may drop out of the war or collapse.

3. In that case it will be the immediate task of soth Mountain Army to continue to hold the Northern area, which is vital to our war industry, by moving back the front to a line running through Karesuando, Ivalo, and the sector at present held by XIX (Mountain) Corps. 23oth and ayoth Infantry Divisions will come under its command in due course. It would then be especially important to defend against ground and air attack the Kolosjoki nickel mines, which would be particularly threatened. It is impossible to say at present how long this task may be practical. 4. The exceptional difficulty of moving troops and making war under these conditions entails early preparations, which are likely to be lengthy. They will cover the following points:

(a) Construction and maintenance of roads likely to be used for troop movements. Establishment of staging-posts.

(b) Preparation of supplies for the Army should it withdraw.

(c) Plans to destroy establishments of value to the enemy in the areas to be evacuated.

(d) Storage of supplies.

(e) Preparation for billeting troops after they have withdrawn to their future area of operations.

(f) Preparations for signals traffic.

The appropriate preparations to be made by aoth Mountain Army in immediate consultation with the Commander Armed Forces Norway must apply to all seasons of the year. They should assume the worst, i.e. that it may be impossible to move those troops not required for holding the Northern area by sea from Finnish ports.

5. If the measures ordered cannot be carried out inconspicuously, they are to be explained to our own troops, and to the Finns, as concerned exclusively with the development of communications between Norway and Finland. These communications will enable divisions to be moved from the Reserve of Commander Armed Forces Norway to Finland, even in winter if necessary. The number of officers to be informed of the further reasons for these preparations will be restricted to a minimum. If exchange of correspondence or verbal exchange is necessary between Commander Armed Forces Norway and 2oth

Mountain Army, it must be routed via Germany, not via Sweden.

6. 20th Mountain Army is to submit to the High Command of the Armed Forces (Operations Staff) a short memorandum on the conduct of the proposed operation, with special reference to supplies.

The progress of preparations ordered in paragraph 4 will be reported by 20th Mountain Army and Commander Armed Forces Norway by 1st December 1943.

*signed: Adolf Hitler*

### **Directive No 51**

The Führer

Führer Headquarters, 3rd November 1943.

27 copies.

### **Directive No. 51**

The hard and costly struggle against Bolshevism during the last two and a half years, which has involved the bulk of our military strength in the East, has demanded extreme exertions. The greatness of the danger and the general situation demanded it. But the situation has since changed. The danger in the East remains, but a greater danger now appears in the West: an Anglo-Saxon landing! In the East, the vast extent of the territory makes it possible for us to lose ground, even on a large scale, without a fatal blow being dealt to the nervous system of Germany.

It is very different in the West! Should the enemy succeed in breaching our defences on a wide front here, the immediate consequences would be unpredictable. Everything indicates that the enemy will launch an offensive against the Western front of Europe, at the latest in the spring, perhaps even earlier.

I can therefore no longer take responsibility for further weakening the West, in favour of other theatres of war. I have therefore decided to reinforce its defences, particularly those places from which the long-range bombardment of England will begin. For it is here that the enemy must and will attack, and it is here, - unless all indications are misleading - that the decisive battle against the landing forces will be fought.

Holding and diversionary attacks are to be expected on other fronts. A large-scale attack on Denmark is also not out of the question. From a naval point of view such an attack would be more difficult to deliver, nor could it be as effectively supported by air, but if successful, its political and operational repercussions would be very great.

At the beginning of the battle the whole offensive strength of the enemy is bound to be thrown against our forces holding the coast-line. Only by intensive construction, which means straining our available manpower and materials at home and in the occupied territories to the limit, can we strengthen our coastal defences in the short time which probably remains. The ground weapons which will shortly reach Denmark and the occupied areas in the West (heavy anti-tank guns, immobile tanks to be sunk in emplacements, coastal artillery, artillery against landing troops, mines, etc.) will be concentrated at strong-points in the most threatened areas on the coast. Because of this, we must face the fact that the defences of less threatened sectors cannot be improved in the near future.

Should the enemy, by assembling all his forces, succeed in landing, he must be met with a counter-attack delivered with all our weight. The problem will be by the rapid concentration of adequate forces and material, and by intensive training, to form the large

units available to us into an offensive reserve of high fighting quality, attacking power, and mobility, whose counter-attack will prevent the enemy from exploiting the landing, and throw him back into the sea.

Moreover, careful and detailed emergency plans must be drawn up so that everything we have in Germany, and in the coastal areas which have not been attacked, and which is in any way capable of action, is hurled immediately against the invading enemy.

The Air Force and Navy must go into action against the heavy attacks which we must expect by air and sea with all the forces at their disposal, regardless of the losses.

I therefore order as follows :

*A. Army.*

i. *The Chief of the Army General Staff and the Inspector General of Armoured Forces* will submit to me without delay a plan for the distribution, within the next three months, of weapons, tanks, self-propelled guns, motor vehicles, and ammunition on the Western front and in Denmark, in accordance with the requirements of the new situation.

The plan will rest on the following basic principles :

(a) All armoured and Armoured Grenadier divisions in the West will be assured of adequate mobility, and each will be equipped with 93 Mark IV tanks or self-propelled guns, and with strong anti-tank weapons by the end of December 1943.

The 20th Air Force Field Division will be converted into an effective mobile offensive formation by the allocation of self-propelled artillery before the end of

SS Armoured Grenadier Division 'HJ.' [Hitler Youth], 21st Armoured Division, and the infantry and reserve divisions stationed in Jutland will be brought up to full armed strength with speed. (b) There will be a further reinforcement with Mk IV self-propelled guns and heavy anti-tank guns of armoured divisions in reserve in the West and in Denmark, and of the selfpropelled artillery training unit in Denmark.

(c) A monthly allocation of a hundred heavy anti-tank guns Mk 40 and 43 (of which half will be mobile), for the months of November and December, in addition to the heavy anti-tank guns, will be made to the newly raised formations in the West.

(d) An increased allocation of weapons (including about 1,000 machineguns) will be made to improve the equipment of ground forces engaged in coastal defence in the West and in Denmark, and to coordinate the equipment of units which are to be withdrawn from sectors not under attack. (e) A liberal supply of short-range anti-tank weapons will be granted to formations stationed in threatened areas.

(f) The fire-power in artillery and anti-tank guns of formations stationed in Denmark, and on the coasts of occupied territories in the West, will be increased, and Army artillery will be strengthened.

2. No units or formations stationed in the West and in Denmark, nor any of the newly raised self-propelled armoured artillery or anti-tank units in the West, will be withdrawn to other fronts without my approval. The Chief of the Army General Staff and the Inspector General of Armoured Forces will report to me, through the High Command of the Armed Forces (Operations Staff), when the equipment of armoured units, selfpropelled artillery units, and light anti-tank units and companies is complete.

3. *Commander-in-Chief West* will decide which additional formations from sectors of the front that have not been under attack can be moved up and made capable of an offensive role, by a time-table of exercises in the field and similar training measures. In this connexion, I insist that areas unlikely to be threatened should be ruthlessly stripped of all

except the smallest forces essential for guard duties. In areas from which these reserves are drawn, units will be formed from security and emergency forces for duties of surveillance and protection. Our labour units employed on construction will open the lines of communication which will probably be destroyed by the enemy, employing for this the help of the local population on an extensive scale.

4. The Commander of German troops in Denmark will adopt the measures outlined in paragraph 3 for the area under his command.

5. The Chief of Army Equipment and Commander of the Replacement Army will raise battle groups of regimental strength in the Home Defence area from training depots, troops under instruction, army schools, training battalions and recuperative establishments. These will form security and engineer-construction battalions, and will be ready, on receipt of special orders, to move within forty-eight hours of being called up. In addition, all further personnel available will be incorporated in infantry units and equipped with such weapons as are available, so that they may immediately replace the heavy casualties to be expected.

#### *B. Air Force.*

In view of the new situation, the offensive and defensive power of formations of the Air Force stationed in the West and in Denmark will be increased. Plans will be drawn up to ensure that all forces available and suitable for defensive operations will be taken from flying units and mobile antiaircraft artillery units engaged in Home Defence, from schools and training units in the Home Defence area, and will be employed in the West, and if necessary in Denmark.

Ground establishments in Southern Norway, Denmark, North-western Germany, and the West will be organized and supplied so that, by the largest possible degree of decentralization, our own units are not exposed to enemy bombing at the beginning of large-scale operations, and the weight of the enemy attack will be effectively broken up. This applies particularly to our fighter forces, whose ability to go into action must be increased by the establishment of a number of emergency airfields. Particular attention will be paid to good camouflage. In this connexion also I expect all possible forces to be made available for action regardless of the circumstances, by stripping less threatened areas of their troops.

#### *C. Navy.*

The Navy will draw up plans for bringing into action naval forces capable of attacking the enemy landing fleet with all their strength. Coastal defences<sup>47</sup> under construction will be completed with all possible speed, and the establishment of additional coastal batteries and the laying of further obstacles on the flanks will be considered.

Preparations will be made for the employment of all ranks capable of fighting, from schools, training establishments, and other land establishments, so that they may be deployed with the least possible delay, if only on security duties, in the battle area where enemy landings have taken place. In the naval plans for strengthening defences in the West, special attention will be given to defence against enemy landings in Norway or Denmark. In this connexion, I attach particular importance to plans for using large numbers of submarines in the northern sea areas. A temporary diminution of submarine forces in the Atlantic must be accepted.

#### *D. SS.*

The Reichsführer SS will test the preparedness of units of the Waffen-SS and Police for

operational, security, and guard duties. Preparations will be made to raise battle-trained formations for operational and security duties from training, reserve, and recuperative establishments, and from schools and other units in the Home Defence Area.

E. Commanders-in-Chief of the branches of the Armed Forces, the Reichsführer S.S the Chief of the Army General Staff, Commander-in-Chief West, the Chief of Army Equipment and Commanding General of Replacement Army, the Inspector-General of Armoured Forces, and the Commander of German troops in Denmark will report to me by the 15th November the steps taken, and those which they propose to take. I expect all staffs concerned to exert every effort during the time which, still remains in preparation for the expected decisive battle in the West. All those responsible will ensure that time and manpower are not wasted in dealing with questions of jurisdiction, but that they are employed in increasing our powers of defence and attack. *signed; adolf hitler*

**NOTE: Directive No 51 was the last Hitler's numbered directives**

**28th January 1944.**

From: High Command of the Armed Forces, Operations Staff. To: Commander-in-Chief South-west, Field Marshal Kesselring. Within the next few days the 'Battle for Rome' will begin. It will be decisive for the defence of Central Italy and for the fate of our Army. But the significance of this struggle goes even beyond that, because the landing at Nettuno marked the opening of the invasion of Europe planned for 1944.

The purpose of the enemy is to hold down large German forces as far away as possible from the bases in England where the main invasion forces are still standing ready, to wear down the German forces, and to gain experience for future operations.

Of the significance of the battle which 14th Army is about to give, every one of its soldiers must be thoroughly aware.

It is not sufficient to give clear and tactically correct orders. All officers and men of the Army, the Air Force, and the Naval forces must be penetrated by a fanatical will to end this battle victoriously, and never to relax until the last enemy soldier has been destroyed or thrown back into the sea. The battle must be fought in a spirit of holy hatred for an enemy who is conducting a pitiless war of extermination against the German people, who is prepared to adopt any means to this end, and who, without any higher ethical purpose, seeks only the annihilation of Germany and, with her, of European culture.

The fight must be hard and merciless, not only against the enemy, but against all officers and units who fail in this decisive hour.

The enemy must be forced to recognize, as he did in the fighting in Sicily, on the Rapido river, and at Ortona, that the fighting strength of Germany is unbroken, and that the great invasion of 1944 is a hazardous enterprise which will be drowned in the blood of Anglo-Saxon soldiers.

*signed: adolf hitler*

**Führer Order No 11**

The Führer.

High Command of the Army.

Führer Headquarters, 8th March, 1944.

**Fuhrer Order No. 11 (Commandants of Fortified Areas and Battle Commandants)**

In view of various incidents, I issue the following orders:

i. A distinction will be made between 'Fortified Areas' [*jeste Platze*], each under a 'Fortified Area Commandant's and 'Local Strong-points' [*Orisstiitzpunkte*], each under a 'Battle Commandant'.

The '*Fortified Areas*' will fulfil the function of fortresses in former historical times. They will ensure that the enemy does not occupy these areas of decisive operational importance. They will allow themselves to be surrounded, thereby holding down the largest possible number of enemy forces, and establishing conditions favourable for successful counterattacks.

'*Local Strong-points*' are strong-points deep in the battle area, which will be tenaciously defended in the event of enemy penetration. By being included in the main line of battle they will act as a reserve of defence and, should the enemy break through, as hinges and corner-stones for the front, forming positions from which counter-attacks can be launched.

2. Each '*Fortified Area Commandant*' should be a specially selected, hardened soldier, preferably of General's rank. He will be appointed by the Army Group concerned.

Fortified Area Commandants will be personally responsible to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Group.

Fortified Area Commandants will pledge their honour as soldiers to carry out their duties to the last.

Only the Commander-in-Chief of an Army Group in person may, with my approval, relieve the Fortified Area Commandant of his duties, and perhaps order the surrender of the fortified area.

Fortified Area Commandants *are subordinate* to the Commander of the Army Group, or Army, in whose sector the fortified area is situated. Further delegation of command to General Officers commanding formations will not take place.

Apart from the garrison and its security forces, all persons within a fortified area, or who have been collected there, are *under the orders* of the Commandant, irrespective of whether they are soldiers or civilians, and without regard to their rank or appointment.

The Fortified Area Commandant has the *military rights* and disciplinary powers of a Commanding General. In the performance of his duties he will have at his disposal mobile courts martial and civilian courts. The *staff of Fortified Area Commandants* will be appointed by the Army Group concerned. The Chiefs of Staff will be appointed by High Command of the Army, in accordance with suggestions made by the Army Group. 3. The *garrison* of a fortified area comprises :

the security garrison, and the general garrison,

*The security garrison* must be inside the fortified area at all times. Its strength will be laid down by Commander-in-Chief Army Group, and will be determined by the size of the area and the tasks to be fulfilled (preparation and completion of defences, holding the fortified area against raids or local attacks by the enemy).

*The general garrison* must be made available to the Commandant of the fortified area in sufficient time for the men to have taken up defensive positions and be installed when a full-scale enemy attack threatens. Its strength will be laid down by Commander-in-Chief Army Group, in accordance with the size of the fortified area and the task which is to be performed (total defence of the fortified area).

4. The '*Battle Commandant*' comes under the orders of the local forces commander. He will be appointed by him, will be subordinate to him, and will receive operation orders from him. His rank will depend upon the importance of the position in the battle area and



the strength of the garrison. His duties call for specially energetic officers whose qualities have been proved in crisis.

5. *The strength of the garrisons* of a 'Local Strong-point' will be determined by the importance of the position and the forces available. It will receive its orders from the authorities to which the Battle Commandant is subordinate.

6. *The duties* of 'Fortified Area Commanders' and 'Battle Commandants' as well as a list of fortified areas, and of reports on them submitted by Army Groups, are contained in the appendices.

7. All previous orders concerning Battle Commandants are hereby cancelled.

*signed:* adolf hitler

### **Operation Order No 7**

High Command of the Army.

2nd April 1944.

### **Operation Order No. 7 Directive for further operations by Army Group A, Army Group South, and Army Group Centre**

1. The Russian offensive in the south of the Eastern front has passed its climax. The Russians have exhausted and divided their forces. The time has now come to bring the Russian advance to a final standstill. For this reason I have introduced measures of a most varied kind. It is now imperative, while holding firm to the Crimea, to hold or win back the following line:

Dniester to north-east of Kishinev-Jassy-Targul Neamt -the Eastern exit from the Carpathians between Targul Neamt and Kolomyia - TernopolBrody-Kovel.

2. For the present, *Army Group A* will hold the line Tiligulski-LimanDniester around Dubosari, until we can assume that the Crimea can be supplied independently of Odessa. No more will be done than to prepare for the retreat to the Dniester line. After closing the gap between 8th Army and the Carpathians, the strongest possible forces will be switched quickly from the right flank to the left flank of the Army Group. Rumanian forces must be made mobile and deployed forward by us in every way possible. Rumanian forces will be disposed in accordance with the terrain, so that chiefly German troops occupy the sectors in danger of enemy tank attack. It is particularly important that the heavy anti-tank guns which I have placed at the disposal of the Rumanians should reach them as early as possible, and be brought into position in the most threatened areas. They will be manned by German gun-crews. This may be a question of hours. The Army Group is fully responsible for this, and will employ a special staff to deal with it.

3. The chief task of *Army Group South* is to free the surrounded 1st Tank Army, 1st Tank Army must continue to break through to the north-west. An offensive force of great striking power will be formed in the area southeast of Lemberg<sup>48</sup> from available and newly arriving formations. This force must advance southwest at the earliest possible moment, in strong concentration, in order to annihilate the enemy forces which have broken through in the Stanislav area, and to re-establish connexion with 1st Tank Army. In general, I am in agreement with the plans of Field Marshal von Manstein. After contact has been established with 1st Tank Army, the line originally laid down will finally be secured by local attacks; contact will be made with Army Group Centre, south of Kovel; and a unified front will be established. The Hungarian forces which have been raised in Hungary will come under command of Army Group South. It is important here, too, to put them in the front line along with German formations to stiffen them. Rigorous orders are

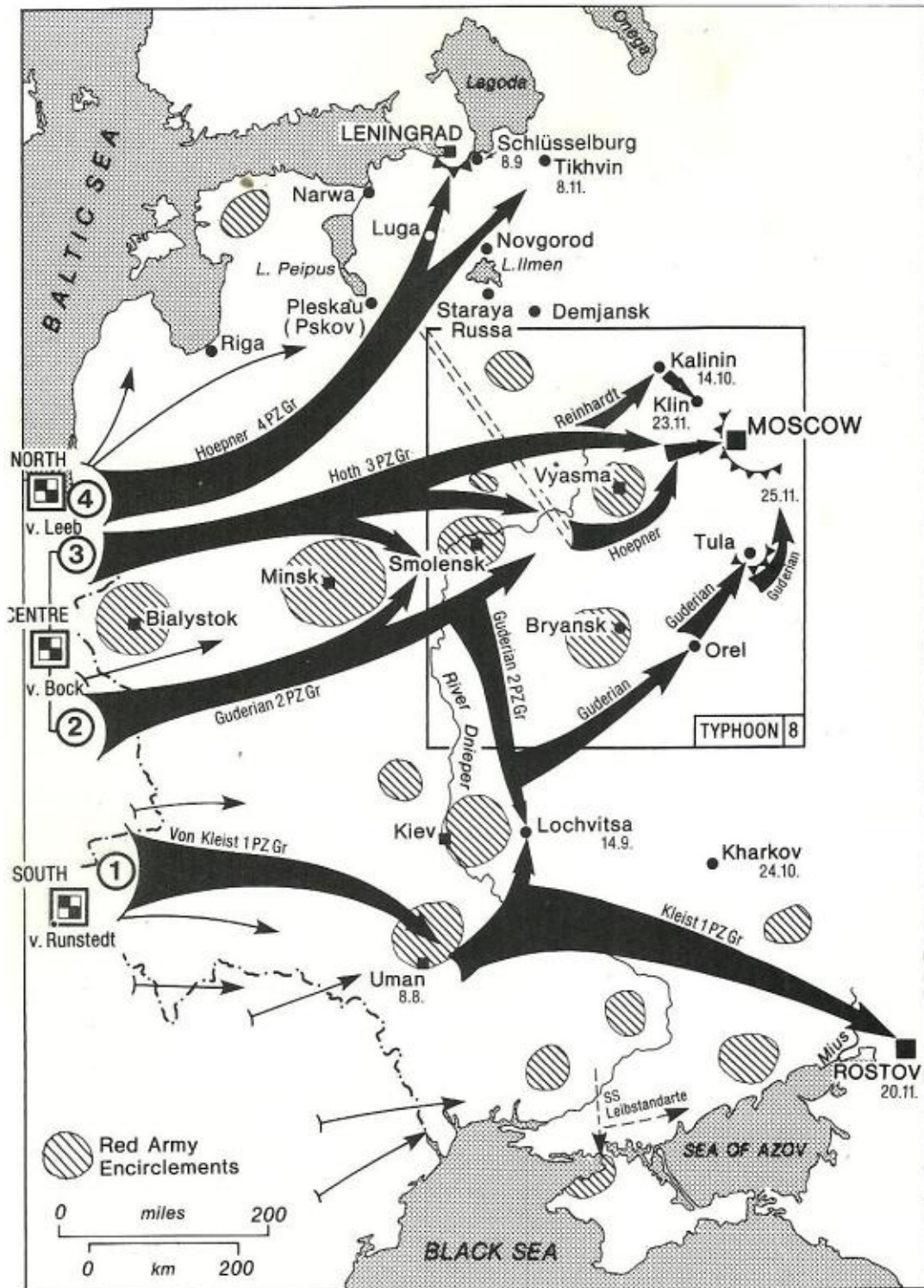
necessary here.

4. For Army Group Centre, I am in full agreement with the heavy concentration around Brest.<sup>49</sup>

The first task of Army Group Centre is to fight its way out of Kovel and establish contact with Army Group South.

*signed: adolf hitler*

## Operation Barbarossa



In Operation 'Barbarossa', Army Groups North, Centre and South with powerful Luftwaffe support strike in three directions: Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev-Rostov. Encirclements of the Red Army are a triumphant feature of the early days, but military operations fanning out over a vast and often trackless interior are soon brought to a

standstill. Halted by difficult terrain, bad weather, inadequate supplies and exhausted by an unyielding defence, the panzer divisions after capturing Kiev are driven to unrewarding battles for Leningrad and Moscow.

Hoepner (Fourth Pz-Army) 22 June leads Army Group North (von Leeb) to Leningrad. Guderian and Hoth (Second and Third Pz-Armies) 22 June responsible for the main German effort, lead Army Group Centre (von Bock) in the Moscow direction. Von Kleist (First Pz Army) 22 June leads Army Group South (von Runstedt) to Kiev and Rostov. The outstanding panzer success of the early weeks is an envelopment of five Russian armies east of Kiev resulting in 600,000 prisoners for which von Kleist and Guderian are responsible. In the course of a subsequent operation, 'Typhoon' 2 October 1941, convergent action by Guderian, Reinhardt and Hoepner encircling Bryansk and Vyasma proves equally rewarding.

Seventeen panzer divisions, thirteen and a half motorized divisions lead 'Barbarossa' - but despite optimistic predictions of a three-week campaign, operations are destined to last four years. Expanded and re-equipped, in later campaigns the panzer force will nevertheless fail to match Russian numbers or strategy. Divisions are switched between theatres, fronts, and controlling corps. Four years later on the Central Front in January 1945, when the Red Army pushes across the Vistula, only four panzer divisions supporting indifferently equipped infantry divisions face 163 Russian divisions. At the conclusion of hostilities the panzer force is totally burned out and only weak battle groups remain at the Army's disposal.

**Hoepner** (4) PzGr 4: XXXXI PzK Reinhardt, LVI von Manstein: three PzDivs 1st, 6th, 8th: three MotDivs 3rd, 36th and SS Totenkopf (later trapped with SS 'Polizei', 'Danemark' and others at Demjansk). **Hoth** (3) PzGrS: XXXIX PzK Schmidt, LVII PzK Kuntzen: four PzDivs 7th, 12th, 19th, 20th: three MotDivs 14th, 18th, 20th: No SS formations **Guderian** (2) PzGr 2: XXIV PzK Geyr, XXXXVI PzK Vietinghoff XXXXVII PzK Lemelsen, five PzDivs 3rd, 4th, 10th, 17th, 18th: 3 1/2 Mot Divs 10th, 29th, SS Das Reich (later switched to Hoepner for attack on Moscow) and Regiment 'Gross Deutschland'

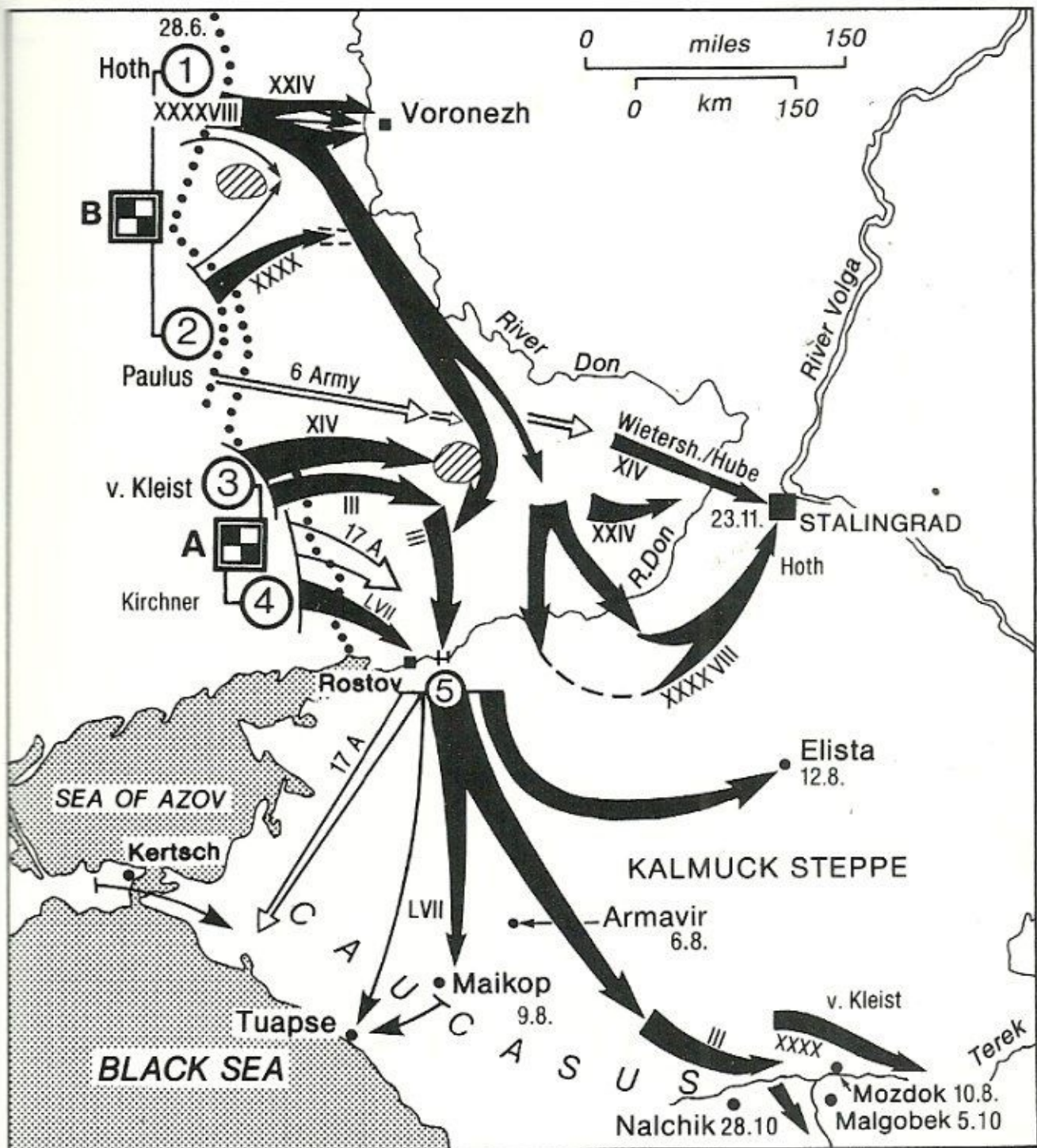
**Von Kleist** (1) PzGr 1: III PzK von Mackensen; XIV PzK von Wietersheim; XXXXVIII PzK Kempf; five PzDivs 9th, 11th, 13th, 14th, 16th; four MotDivs 16th, 25th, SS 'Wiking', SS (Brigade) 'Leibstandarte' AH, Regt Gen Goering. OKH Reserve 2nd, 5th PzDivs: 60th MotDiv

**German Army** von Brauchitsch 153 divisions (seventeen Pz, + two reserve, 134 mot divs) 3,417 tanks

**Luftwaffe** Keller, 1st Air Fleet; I Air Corps/A Gr North; Kesselring 2 Air Fleet, II, VIII Air Corps/A Gr Centre; Lohr 4th Air Fleet, IV, V Air Corps/A Gr South; - 3,800 aircraft

**Red Army/Air Force** 150-180 divs, 20,000 tanks, but only 1,000 T34s and 500 KVs, 10,000 aircraft (2,750 modern types).

## **Operation Blau**



Operation 'Blue' ('Brunswick'). Failing with 'Barbarossa' and Typhoon' to achieve anything more in 1941 than astronomical numbers of prisoners-of-war and jumping-off points from which to continue the campaign in the east, Hitler assigns new objectives to the Army Groups.

A shortage of armour restricts offensive operations to Army Group South (later divided 'A' and 'B') whose re-equipped panzer force in consecutive stages of Operation 'Blue' renamed 'Brunswick' 30 June, will be expected to trap the Red Army west of the River Don - seize Stalingrad in Operation 'Siegfried' (Army Group 'B') - and in Operation 'Mouse' (Army Group 'A') advance into the Caucasus to occupy Russian oil-producing centres at Grosny, Tiflis and Baku. None of the objectives is attained.

The inclusion of more than thirty non-German formations - sixteen Roumanian, ten Hungarian, nine Italian in the August total of one hundred divisions committed to 'Blue'/'



'Brunswick' will further undermine Hitler's flawed strategy of widely diverging offensives. Deployed north and south of Stalingrad, the relative inability of satellite divisions to withstand attack will be ruthlessly exploited by the Red Army. *See Part 2, Satellite contributions for the panzer force.*

Hoth Fourth Pz-Army 28 June 1942 succeeds in capturing Voronezh on 6 July for Army Group 'B', but disaster follows in action supporting Sixth Army at Stalingrad (map 11). Von Kleist First Pz-Army 9 July 1942 joins operations that will take the PzArmy into the Caucasus, but the strenuously resisted offensive is abandoned after supplies and air support are curtailed.

Nine panzer and seven motorized divisions lead the offensive. **Hoth (1) Fourth Pz Army:** XXIV PzK; XXXXVIII PzK; three PzDivs, 9th, 11th, 24th; three mot divs, 3rd, 16th, Gross Deutschland. Von Weichs Second Army; Hungarian Second Army

**Geyr (2) XXXX PzK:** 3rd, 23rd PzDivs, 29th InfDivMot;

**Paulus Sixth Army**

**Von Kleist (3) First Pz Army:** XIV PzK; 14th, 22nd PzDivs; 60th InfDivMot, III PzK, LSSAH, 16th Pz; Roumanian Third Army

**Kirchner (4)** (von Wietersheim) LVII PzK; 13th PzDiv, SS Wiking; Ruoff, Seventeenth Army: Part Italian Eighth Army

**Von Kleist (5) First Pz Army;** Armeegruppe Ruoff, Seventeenth Army and Roumanian Third Army; XXXX, III, LVII Pz Corps, 23rd, 3rd, 13th Pz Divs, 16th Mot, SS Wiking, and CD until August 1942

**Army Gr 'B' (1)** von Bock/von Weichs 27 divs inc. three Pz, three PzGr, ten Hungarian, 400 tanks **(2)** nineteen divs inc. two Pz, one PzGr **Army Group 'A' (3)** List 16 divs inc. three Pz, two mot, four Roum. **(4)** eighteen divs inc one Pz, one PzGr, four Roum., six It. **(5)** twenty divs inc. three Pz, three Mot, four Roum. one Slovak (Schnelle), 400 tanks (total Army Grps 'A' and 'B' 1,500 tanks)

**4th Air Fleet Von Richthofen:** I, Fiebig VIII Air Corps. 2 Pflugbeil IV Air Corps (until 26 July, then 5), 3, 4, 5 = 1,500 aircraft

**Red Army, Air Force (1) (2)** Golikov Voronezh/Bryansk Fr; five armies (one tank) 1,000 tanks. **(3) (4)** Timoshenko SW/ Stalingrad Fr seven armies (two tank forming) by 20 July, 38 divs, one air army 400 aircraft. **(5)** Budenny N. Caucasus Fr; four armies, one air army 120 tanks, 130 aircraft.

### **Last cauldron: Army and SS in Hungary, 1945**

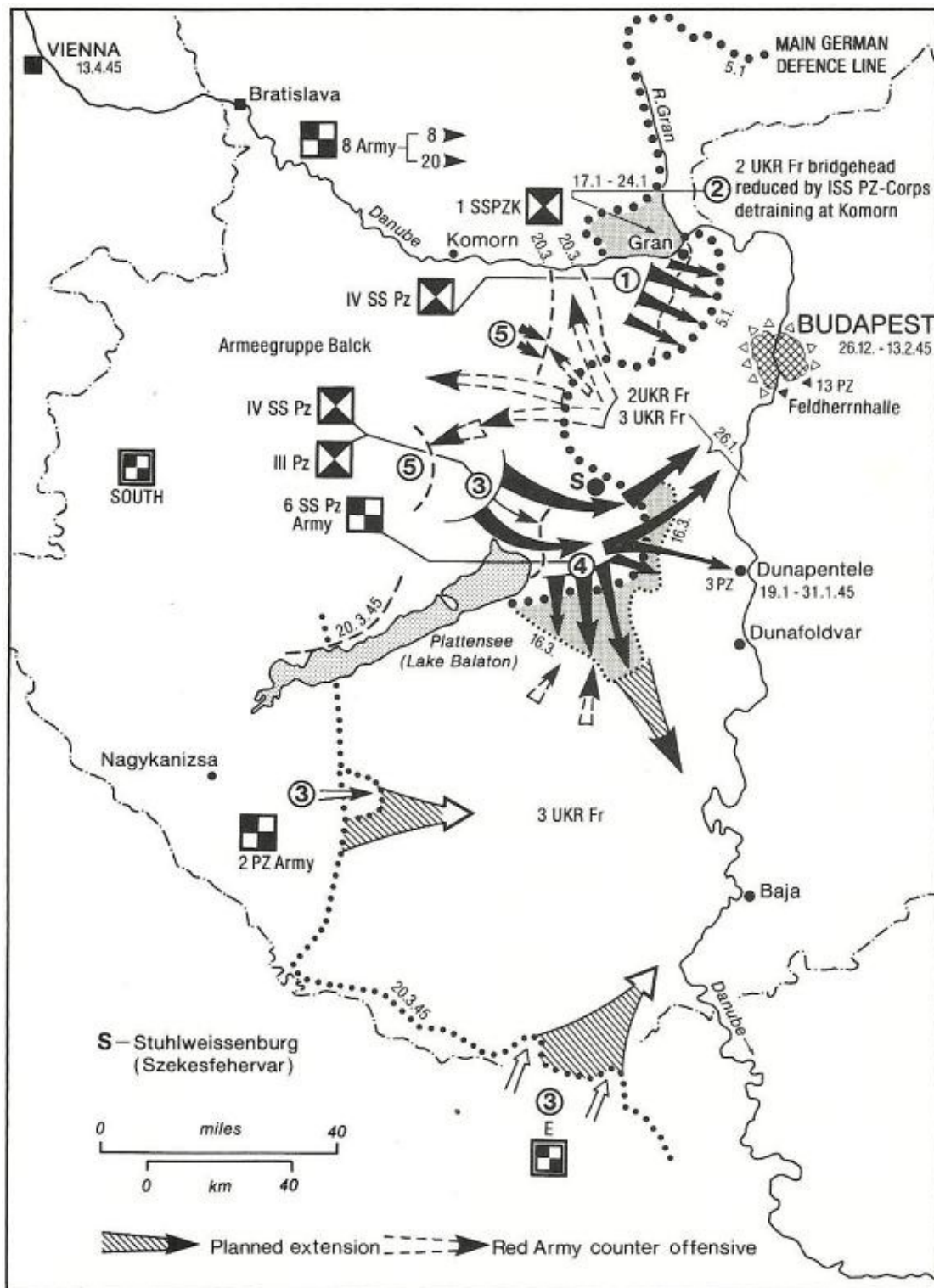
Following an unsuccessful conclusion to 'Autumn Mist' (map 17) Sixth 55

Panzer Army (Dietrich) is switched across Europe to reinforce Army Group South (Wohter) defending western Hungary. There on 26 December 1944 Budapest, the capital city of 800,000 inhabitants housing numerous military agencies and defended by upwards of 70,000 men including 13th Pz Division and Feldhermhalle responsible to SS General Pfeffervon Wildenbruck (IX SS Mtn Corps), is encircled by two Ukrainian fronts. **Balck, Gille (1)** (Sixth SS Pz-Army) 13 February 1945. Operation 'Konrad' is the first of three attempts by Armeegruppe Balck (Sixth Army) to relieve Budapest. Starting on 1 January with IV SS Panzer Corps (Gille) transferred with Totenkopf and Wiking from Ninth Army/ Army Group Centre, 'Konrad' is a failure; despite heavy fighting by SS Wiking to within fifteen miles of the perimeter. Budapest remains besieged. 'Konrad 2' a second attempt by III PzK (Breith) 9-12 January fares no better. **Priess (2)** Panzer battles next

develop east of Komorn where an unexpectedly powerful Operation 'South Wind' lead by I SS Pz Corps - LSSAH and 12 SS HJ - reduces 2nd UKR Front's bridgehead on the River Gran. Pz Corps Feldherrnhalle with remnants of units isolated in Budapest provides mainly infantry support.

**Balck, Gille, Breith (3)** Meanwhile Sixth Army's third relief attempt 'Konrad 3' follows on 18 January 1945, from a new direction. But the reinforced SS Panzer Corps (Gille) attacking south around Stuhlweissenburg with 1st and 3rd Panzer Divisions, SS Totenkopf and SS Wiking while flank protection to the north is provided by Breith's III Panzer Corps - 6th and 23rd Panzer Divisions and south by Pz Recce Bns 1st, 3rd, 23rd again fails to relieve the city. A breakout attempt by the defenders on 11 February is equally unsuccessful; Budapest surrenders on 13 February 1945. Hitler's arbitrary diversion of panzer divisions to this secondary front is nevertheless set to continue.





**Dietrich, Balck, de Angelis (4)** Sixth SS Pz-Army 6 March 1945 opens a new offensive 'Spring Awakening' in which Sixth Army (Balck), Second Panzer Army (de Angelis) - four infantry divisions and a weak 16th Reichsfuhrer SS Panzer Grenadier Division (Baum) - are also involved in Hitler's plan to encircle the Red Army west of the Danube, recapture Budapest and retain oil-production centres at Nagykanizsa south-west of Lake Balaton. But 'Spring Awakening' falters in waterlogged terrain and when counter-attacked in strength by 3rd UKr Front fails to recover momentum. **(5)** A renewal of Russian attacks aiming at Vienna and the Danube valley threatening German communications precipitates a general retreat, by 20 March, panzer rearguards are fighting desperately to defend positions west of their original start-line.

**6th Armeegruppe** Balck; Sixth Army, Hung Third Army, Gille, IV SS Pz Corps; Breith

III Pz-Corps, Harteneck I Cav Corps, SS Wiking, SS Totenkopf, Pz Divs 1st, 3rd, 6th, 23rd, three cav divs, Hungarian tanks, infantry, Army troops. After 14 January, 503, 509 Tiger Bns. By 20 January, 274 Pz Kpfw IV-VIs, Jag Pz and SPs. By 6 March, 138 mixed tanks. **Eighth Army** Kreysing (north of Danube) 8th, 20th Pz Divs, remnant battle groups Feldherrnhalle, 13th Pz.

**Sixth SS Pz-Army** Dietrich; Priess I SS Pz Corps, Bittrich II SS Pz Corps, SS Pz-Divs 1st, 2nd, 9th, 12th. Reinforced 6 March, 23rd Pz and two cav divs. By 6 March, 540 tanks and SP guns (320 battle-fit).

**Second Pz-Army** de Angelis; Lanz XXII Mtn Corps, Konrad LXVIII Corps, 16th SS PzGren Div, four Inf divs (two Mtn).

**4th Air Fleet** Dessloch; Deichmann, I Air Corps, by 6 March 850 aircraft. **Red Army/Air Force** 1 January 1945, Malinovsky 2nd UKr Front; Tolbuchin 3rd UK Front; 54 Inf divs; five mech corps; three armd corps, two cav corps. By 6 March, 407 tanks, 965 aircraft.

## Ranks in German Army

### Fahnenjunker

A cadet is a trainee. The term is frequently used to refer those training to become an officer in the military, often a person who is a junior trainee. Its meaning may vary between countries. The term is also used in civilian contexts and as a general attributive, for example in its original sense of a branch of a ruling house which is not currently in the direct line of succession.

### Fähnrich

**Fähnrich** is an officer candidate rank in the Austrian Bundesheer and German Bundeswehr. However, *Fähnrich* ranks are often incorrectly compared with the rank of ensign, which shares a similar etymology but is a full-fledged (albeit junior) commissioned officer rank. The word *Fähnrich* comes from an older German military title, *Fahnenträger* (flag bearer), and first became a distinct military rank in Germany 1 January 1899.

### Lieutenant

A lieutenant (abbreviated Lt., LT., Lieut. and LEUT.) is a junior commissioned officer in many nations' armed forces.

The meaning of lieutenant differs in different military formations (see comparative military ranks), but is often subdivided into senior (first lieutenant) and junior (second lieutenant) ranks. In navies it is often equivalent to the army rank of captain; it may also indicate a particular post rather than a rank. The rank is also used in fire services, emergency medical services, security services and police forces.

Lieutenant may also appear as part of a title used in various other organizations with a codified command structure. It often designates someone who is "second-in-command," and as such, may precede the name of the rank directly above it. For example, a "lieutenant master" is likely to be second-in-command to the "master" in an organization using both ranks. Notable uses include lieutenant governor in various governments, and Quebec lieutenant in Canadian politics.

### Oberleutnant

*Oberleutnant* is a junior officer rank in the militaries of Germany, Czech Republic,

Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Switzerland and Austria. In the German Army, it dates from the early 19th century. Translated as “senior lieutenant”, the rank is typically bestowed upon commissioned officers after five to six years of active duty service.

Oberleutnant is used by both the German Army and the German Air Force. In the NATO military comparison system, a German *Oberleutnant* is the equivalent of a first lieutenant in the Army/Air Forces of Allied nations. Other uses

The equivalent naval rank is Oberleutnant zur See.

In Nazi Germany, within the SS, SA and Waffen-SS, the rank of *Obersturmführer* was considered the equivalent of an *Oberleutnant* in the German Army.

## **Hauptmann**

*Hauptmann* is a German word usually translated as captain when it is

used as an officer’s rank in the German, Austrian and Swiss armies. While “*haupt*” in contemporary German means “main”, it also has the dated meaning of “head”, i.e.

*Hauptmann* literally translates to “head man”, which is also the etymological root of “captain” (from Latin *caput* head). It equates to Captain in the British and US Armies, and is rated OF-2 in NATO.

More generally, it can be used to denote the head of any hierarchically structured group of people, often as a compound word. For example, a *Feuerwehrhauptmann* is the captain of a fire brigade, while the word *Räuberhauptmann* refers to the leader of a gang of robbers.

Official Austrian titles incorporating the word include *Landeshauptmann*,

*Bezirkshauptmann*, *Burghauptmann* and *Berghauptmann*.

In Saxony during the Weimar Republic, the titles of *Kreishauptmann* and *Amtshauptmann* were held by senior civil servants.

It might cognates with the Swedish word *Hövitsman* that have the same root meaning “Head man” or “the man at the head” and that are closely related to the word “*hövding*” meaning Chieftain. Both titles are since medieval times used for titles within the administration of the state rather than within the military.

## **Major**

Major is a rank of commissioned officer, with corresponding ranks existing in many military forces. When used unhyphenated, in conjunction with no other indicator of rank, the term refers to the rank just senior to that of an army captain and just below the rank of lieutenant colonel. It is considered the most junior of the field ranks. In some militaries, notably France and Ireland, the rank is referred to as *commandant*, while in others it is known as *captain-major*. It is also used in some police forces and other paramilitary rank structures, such as the New York State Police, New Jersey State Police and several others. As a police rank, Major roughly corresponds to the UK rank of Superintendent.

When used in hyphenated or combined fashion, the term can also imply seniority at other levels of rank, including *general-major* or *major general*, denoting a mid-level general officer, and *sergeant major*, denoting the most senior NCO of a military unit.

It can also be used with a hyphen to denote the leader of a military band such as in pipe-major or drum-major.

## **Oberstleutnant**

Oberstleutnant is a German Army and German Air Force rank equal to Lieutenant Colonel, above Major, and below Oberst.

There are two paygrade associated to the rank of *Oberstleutnant*. Paygrade A14 is the standard level paygrade whereas A15 is assigned to senior *Oberstleutnant* personnel. *Oberstleutnant* of the General Staff or Reserve have the words “*im Generalstabsdienst*” (i.G.), “*der Reserve*” (d.R.) after their rank—thus: “OTL i.G.”, “OTL d.R.” *Oberstleutnant* who are definitely retired are described as “*außer Dienst*” (a.D.) During World War II, the SS maintained an equivalent rank known as *Obersturmbannführer*

## **Oberst**

*Oberst* is a military rank in several German-speaking and Scandinavian countries, equivalent to Colonel. It is currently used by both the ground and air forces of Austria, Germany, Switzerland Denmark and Norway. The Swedish rank *överste* is a direct translation, as are the Finnish rank *eversti* and the Icelandic rank *ofursti*. In the Netherlands the rank *overste* is used as a synonym for a lieutenant colonel.

## **Generalmajor**

The German rank of general most likely saw its first use within the religious orders of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, albeit in modified forms and usage from the current understanding of general. By the 16th century, with the rise of standing armies, the German states had begun to appoint generals from the nobility to lead armies in battle. A standard rank system was developed during the Thirty Years War, with the highest rank of *General* usually reserved for the ruling sovereign (e.g. the Kaiser or Elector) and the actual field commander holding the rank of *Generalleutnant*. *Feldmarschall* was a lower rank at that time, as was *Generalwachtmeister*.

By the 17th and 18th centuries, the rank of general was present in all the militaries of the German states, and saw its greatest usage by the militaries of Bavaria and Prussia. It was these two militaries that created the concept of the “general staff”, which was often manned entirely by members of the nobility. To be a general implied membership in the noble class as a count or *Graf*, baron or *Freiherr* (this also accounts for most German generals of this era having the prefix “von” before their names)

## **Generalleutnant**

Lieutenant General is a military rank used in many countries. The rank traces its origins to the Middle Ages where the title of lieutenant general was held by the second in command on the battlefield, who was normally subordinate to a captain general.

In modern armies, lieutenant general normally ranks immediately below general and above major general; it is equivalent to the navy rank of vice admiral, and in air forces with a separate rank structure, it is equivalent to air marshal. A lieutenant general commands an army corps, made up of typically three army divisions, and consisting of around 60,000 soldiers. The term major general is a shortened version of the previous term sergeant major general, which was also subordinate to lieutenant general. This is why a lieutenant general outranks a major general, whereas a major is senior to a lieutenant. In many countries, the rank of corps general has replaced the earlier rank of lieutenant general (e.g. France, Italy). (The ranks of corps general and lieutenant colonel general are intended to solve the apparent lieutenant general / major general anomaly). However, for convenience, this is often translated into English as lieutenant general.

In a number of states, the rank of lieutenant general is the highest army rank in use. In

Lithuania and Latvia, the chief of defence is a lieutenant general, and in the Irish Defence Forces and Israeli forces the Chief of Staff holds this rank.

## **General der Artillery**

General of the artillery may mean:

1. a rank of general in the Imperial Army, Reichswehr or Wehrmacht - the

second-highest regular rank below Generaloberst. Cavalry officers of equivalent rank were called *general of the cavalry*, and infantry officers of equivalent rank *general of the infantry*. The Wehrmacht also had *General der Panzertruppen* (tank troops), *General der Gebirgstruppen* (mountain troops), *General der Pioniere* (engineers), *General der Fallschirmtruppen* (parachute troops), *General der Nachrichtentruppen* (communications troops). Today in the Bundeswehr, the rank of lieutenant general corresponds to the traditional rank of general of the artillery. There was no equivalent rank in the army of East Germany, where it was merged into that of Generaloberst.

2. in the Bundeswehr, the position of an artillery officer responsible for certain questions of troop training and equipment, usually with the rank of Brigadegenerals. The position of general of the artillery is connected with that of commander of the artillery school. Corresponding service positions also exist for other branches of the army. Since in this usage it refers to a position not a rank, an Oberst is sometimes “General of” his respective type of troops. The form of address is usually Herr General and/or Herr Oberst ; the form of address Herr General der Artillerie is unorthodox, since it does not refer to a rank.

## **Generaloberst**

A supreme general or senior general ( *Generaloberst*, sometimes mistranslated “colonel-general” by analogy to *Oberst*, “colonel”) was the second highest general officer rank—below field marshal (*Generalfeldmarschall*)—in the Prussian army as well as in the *Deutsches Heer* of Imperial Germany (1871-1919), the *Reichswehr* (1919-1933), and the *Wehrmacht* (which included the *Luftwaffe*, established in 1935) of Nazi Germany (1933-1945).

The rank was created originally for Emperor William I—then Prince of Prussia—because traditionally members of the royal family were not promoted to the rank of a field marshal.

Since the rank of *Generalfeldmarschall* was also reserved for wartime promotions, the additional rank of a “supreme general in the capacity of a field marshal” — the *Generaloberst im Range eines Generalfeldmarschalls*

— was created for promotions during peace. Such generals were entitled to wear four pips on their shoulder boards, compared to the normal three. The equivalent ranks of a colonel general were in the:

*Kriegsmarine Generaladmiral* (“general admiral”)

*Schutzstaffel (SS) SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer*

*Sturmabteilung (SA)* - no equivalent

*Ordnungspolizei (Orpo) Generaloberst der Polizei* (“colonel general of police”)

## **Generalfeldmarschall**

*Generalfeldmarschall* in German (usually translated simply as General Field Marshal),

was the highest military rank in the armies of several German states including the Austrian Empire and Kingdom of Prussia (later the German Empire).

Originally used in the Holy Roman Empire, the rank of *Generalfeldmarschall* became the highest military rank in the Habsburg Monarchy equivalent to that of *Marshall* in France or *Field Marshall* in England. Following the fall of the Holy Roman Empire, it was kept in the armies of the Austrian Empire (1804-1867) then in those of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1919). The Prussian army also used it as the army equivalent to a navy Grand Admiral (German: *Großadmiral*) and was later used as a rank on the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe of Germany during WWII.

### In Germany

In the German-Prussian Army and later in the Wehrmacht, the rank had several privileges, such as elevation to nobility, equal rank with ministers of the royal cabinet, right of direct report to the monarch, and a constant escort/protection. In 1854, the rank of Colonel-General (German: *Generaloberst*) was created in order to promote then Prussian prince William (William I, German Emperor) to senior rank without breaking the rule that only wartime field commanders could receive the rank of field marshal for a victory in a decisive battle or the capture of a fortification or major town. In 1870 Prince Friedrich Karl of Prussia and Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm—who had commanded armies during the Franco-Prussian War—became the first Prussian princes appointed field marshals.

### Ranks in Waffen S.S

Rank Shoulder Sleeve insignia strap (parka) collar badge

Rank of the **Equivalent** to the Waffen-SS Wehrmacht (Heer)



SS-Oberst  
gruppenführer und Generaloberst der Waffen-SS  
(SS-Supreme group leader  
and colonel  
general of the Waffen-SS)

SS-Obergruppenführer und General der  
Waffen-SS  
(SS-Senior  
group leader  
and general of the Waffen-SS)

SS-Grup  
penführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS  
(SS-Group leader and lieutenant general of the Waffen-SS)

SS-Brigade  
führer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS  
(SS-Brigade  
leader and major general of the Waffen-SS) Generaloberst



(OF-9)



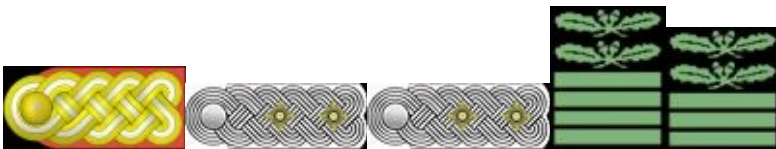
General  
der Infanterie (etc.) (OF-8)



Generalleutnant (OF-7)



Generalmajor  
(OF-6)



SS-Oberführer (SS-Senior leader of the Waffen-SS)

SS-Standartenführer  
(SS-Regiment)

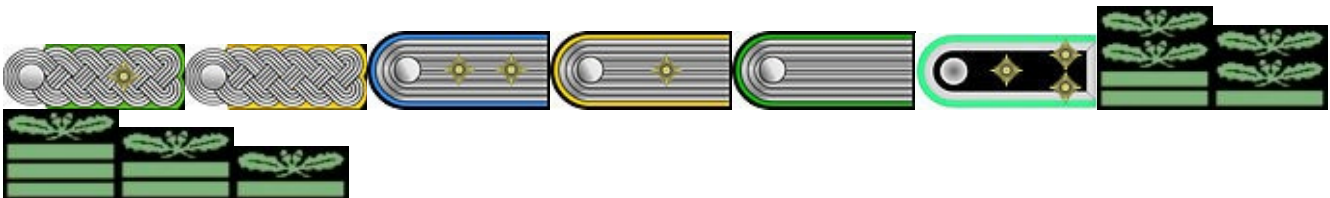


No equivalent.

Oberst



(OF-5)



leader)

SS-Obersturmbannführer  
(SS-Senior assault unit leader)

SS-Sturm  
bannführer  
(SS-Assault  
unit leader)

SS-Haupt

sturmführer (SS-Chief assault leader)

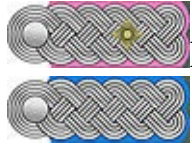
SS-Ober

sturmführer (SS-Senior assault leader)

SS-Unter

sturmführer (SS-Junior assault leader) Obers

leutnant (OF-4)



Major (OF-3)

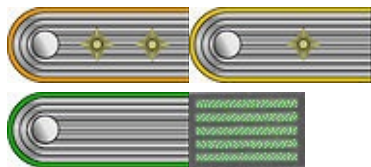
Haupt

mann/Rittmeister

(OF-2)

Oberleutnant

(OF-1)



Leutnant (OF-1)

SS-Sturmscharführer, German nickname “Spiess” is a specific appointment, comparable to the “company sergeant major”. Appointment insignia: so-called “double piston rings” on both cuffs (of sleeves) on the uniform jacket and the overcoat. The position is committed to experienced senior NCO already promoted to SS-Haupt scharführers (OR-7 or SSScharführer (OR-6), seldom SSScharführer (OR-5).

SS-Sturm

scharführer

(SS-Assault  
squad leader)

SS-Stabs

scharführer

“Spiess”

(senior NCO,

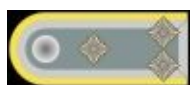
e.g. Haupt

scharführer or Ober

scharführer, seldom

Scharführer)

Stabsfeldwebel (OR8)



Hauptfeldwebel “Spiess”

(senior NCO e.g., Oberfeldwebel or Feldwebel, seldom Unterfeldwebel)



SS-Hauptscharführer (SS-Chief squad leader)

(SS-Standartenoberjunker / Offiziersanwärter)



SS-Oberscharführer (SS-Senior squad leader) Oberfeldwebel (OR7)

(Oberfähnrich / Offizier

sanwärter)



Feldwebel (OR-6)

(Fähnrich / Offizier

sanwärter)



(SS-Standartenjunker / Offiziersanwärter)



SS-Scharführer (SS-Squad leader)

(SS-Oberjunker / Offiziersanwärter)



SS-Unterscharführer (SS-Junior squad leader)

(SS-Junker / Offiziersanwärter)

Unterfeldwebel (OR5)



Unteroffizier (OR-4) (Fahnenjunker /

Offizier

sanwärter)



No equivalent



Stabsgefreiter

(OR-4)



SS-Rottenführer (SS-Section leader) Obergefreiter

(OR-4)



SS-Sturmmann (SS-Storm trooper) Gefreiter (OR-3)



SS-Oberschütze (SS-Senior rifleman)  
Oberschütze (OR-2)



SS-Schütze  
(SS-Rifleman)



Soldat,  
Schütze, Grenadier (OR-1)

Volunteer to the service of the Waffen-SS Conscript or military  
volunteer who enlists and may become an NCO or Officer of the Wehrmacht

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Parade for the third anniversary of the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* on the barracks' grounds. Sepp Dietrich is at the lectern. May 1935.<sup>239/243</sup>

<sup>2</sup> An S.S of the S.S Totenkopf Standarte Oberbayern

<sup>3</sup> Members of the SS-Verfügungstruppen in 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Insignias of the units Waffen SS from outside the Reich.

<sup>5</sup> Mittlere Schützenpanzerwagen Ausf D/Panzergrenadier Regiment Germania

<sup>6</sup> Leichte Schützenpanzerwagen 5.SS Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung

<sup>7</sup> Panzerkampfwagen III Ausf J (SDKfz 141) 5.SS Panzer Regiment Wiking/II. Abteilung

<sup>8</sup> German 5th SS Panzer Division Wiking

<sup>9</sup> Man of the SS-Freiwilligen Legion Norwegen, was the first Norwegian SS unit to be formed.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Gille, who replaced Felix Steiner as the commander of SS Panzer Division Wiking, seen after his promotion to Gruppenführer (later SS-Obergruppenführer) und Generalleutnant der Waffen SS

<sup>11</sup> Deisenhofer as SS-Obersturmbannführer during service with 3. SS-Division *Totenkopf*, 1942.

<sup>12</sup> Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler leads an Allgemeine-SS ceremony on the anniversary of the death of Heinrich I at Quedlinburg, July 1938

<sup>13</sup> Cadets taking part in a classroom exercise in 1942/43.

<sup>14</sup> *SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz* at Bad Tölz, Bavaria.

<sup>15</sup> SS-TV officers standing in front of prisoners at KZ Gusen in October 1941.

<sup>16</sup> Soviet POWs, Mauthausen concentration camp

<sup>17</sup> A mass grave in Treblinka opened in March 1943; the bodies were removed for burning. In the background, dark grey piles of ash from cremated bodies can be seen.

<sup>18</sup> An SS-TV Scharführer from KZ Mauthausen. His collar patch shows the *Totenkopf* insignia of a concentration camp guard.

<sup>19</sup> Flag Schutzstaffel

<sup>20</sup> *Einsatzgruppen* (German for “task forces”, “deployment groups”; singular *Einsatzgruppe*; official full name *Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*) were *Schutzstaffel* (SS) paramilitary death squads of Nazi Germany that were responsible for mass killings, primarily by shooting, during World War II. The *Einsatzgruppen* had a leading role in the implementation of the Final Solution of the Jewish question (*Die Endlösung der Judenfrage*) in territories conquered by Nazi Germany. Almost all of the people they killed were civilians, beginning with the Polish intelligentsia and swiftly progressing to Soviet political commissars, Jews, and Gypsies throughout Eastern Europe. Under the direction of *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler and the supervision of *SSObergruppenführer* Reinhard Heydrich, the *Einsatzgruppen* operated in territories occupied by the German armed forces following the invasion of Poland in September 1939 and Operation Barbarossa (the invasion of the Soviet Union) in June 1941. The

*Einsatzgruppen* carried out operations ranging from the murder of a few people to operations which lasted over two or more days, such as the massacre at Babi Yar (33,771 killed in two days) and the Rumbula massacre (25,000 killed in two days). As ordered by Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, the Wehrmacht cooperated with the *Einsatzgruppen* and provided logistical support for their operations. Historian Raul Hilberg estimates that between 1941 and 1945 the *Einsatzgruppen* and related auxiliary troops killed more than two million people, including 1.3 million Jews. The total number of Jews murdered during the Holocaust is estimated at 5.5 to 6 million people.

After the close of World War II, 24 senior leaders of the *Einsatzgruppen* were prosecuted in the Einsatzgruppen Trial in 1947–48, charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes. Fourteen death sentences and two life sentences were handed out. Four additional *Einsatzgruppe* leaders were later tried and executed by other nations.

<sup>21</sup> Stavka (Russian: Ставка) is the term used to refer to the high command of the armed forces in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. It was used in Imperial Russia to refer to the administrative staff, and to the General Headquarters in the late 19th Century Imperial Russian armed forces and subsequently in the Soviet Union. In western literature it is sometimes incorrectly written in uppercase STAVKA, but the term is not an acronym. The term may be used to refer to its members, as well as to the headquarters location (its original meaning from the old Russian word *смавка*— Tent).

<sup>22</sup> Guderian at a forward command post for one of his panzer regiments near Kiev, 1941

<sup>23</sup> In May 1941, Panzer Group Kleist became Panzer Group 1 (*Panzergruppe 1*), which was attached to Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group South at the beginning of Operation Barbarossa. At the start of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, Panzer Group 1 included the III, XIV and XLVIII Army Corps (mot.) with five panzer divisions and four motorized divisions (two of them SS) equipped with 799 tanks. Panzer Group 1 served on the southern sector of the Eastern Front against the Red Army and was involved the Battle of Brody which involved as many as 1,000 Red Army tanks. On October 6, 1941, Panzer Group 1 was enlarged to the 1st Panzer Army following the fall of Kiev, with von Kleist still in command. After that the First Panzer Army began its thrust on Rostov. Together with the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler led by Oberstgruppenführer Sepp Dietrich, von Kleist reluctantly made the attack on Rostov. His 1st Panzer Army successfully captured the city in November, but the Red Army recaptured it eight days later.

<sup>24</sup> Panzer Group Guderian (German: *Panzergruppe Guderian*) was formed on 5 June 1940 and named after its commander, general Heinz Guderian, creator of the German Panzerwaffe. In early June 1940, after reaching the English Channel following the breakthrough in the Ardennes, the *Panzergruppe Guderian* was formed from the XIX *Armee* corps, and thrust deep into France, cutting off the Maginot Line. From then on, every unit that served in the *Panzergruppe Guderian* wore a large 'G' on every tank, truck or motorcycle. It was reformed later the same month. In November 1940, it was upgraded into *Panzergruppe 2*.

<sup>25</sup> German troops enter Kharkov from the west, crossing the main railroad running through the city on the viaduct of Sverdlov Street.

<sup>26</sup> As will be seen (paragraph 3 below), 'Undertaking Felix' was still being contemplated. But Hitler was not now relying solely on the cooperation of General Franco. On 9th May

1941, as part of the programme of securing the West of Europe during 'Undertaking Barbarossa', the High Command of the Armed Forces had prepared a plan for the seizure of the Atlantic coast of Spain and Portugal. This operation was known as 'Isabella'. Fresh orders concerning 'Undertaking Isabella' were issued on 20th June 1941, two days before the launching of 'Undertaking Barbarossa'.

<sup>27</sup> For *Sonderstab F*, under Air Force General Felmy, see Directive No. 30 above. On the failure of Rashid Ali's revolt, Felmy had returned to Germany. His 'Special Staff' was reconstituted by a separate order dated 21st June 1941.

<sup>28</sup> A later order (19th September 1941) gave to this intended attack the cover-name 'Taifun (Typhoon)'.

<sup>29</sup> On 19th September 1941 the passage 'as will ... Dniepropetrovsk bridgehead' was deleted by a teleprinter message signed by Warlimont, on behalf of the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces. The message added, 'The Fiihrer wishes all motorized divisions to be added to 1st Armoured Group for the attack from the bridgehead of Kremenchug, since forces of 4th Air Fleet are not available to support an, attack from the Dniepropetrovsk bridgehead.'

<sup>30</sup> i.e. the Rybachiy Peninsula, which juts into the Arctic Ocean on the Russo-Finnish border, close to the Arctic port of Petsamo.

<sup>31</sup> Two such operational orders were issued, on the basis of this directive, on 7th and 21st November 1941.

<sup>32</sup> This was an order issued by Hitler on 11th January 1940, after two German Air Force officers had allowed the secret orders for the Western offensive to fall into Allied hands. It strictly limited access to secret material.

<sup>33</sup> This was changed by teleprinter two days later to 'by the beginning of August'.

<sup>34</sup> *Abwehr II* (in full, *Amt Ausland, Abwehr, Abteilung II*) was the section of the Armed Forces Foreign Intelligence Service which specialized in sabotage and subversion. The Brandenburg Training Regiment (*Lehrregiment Brandenburg*) was a unit under its orders.

<sup>35</sup> This was the project to capture the 'Fisherman's Peninsula'. See above, Directive 37, paragraph 1(d).

<sup>36</sup> This was the cover-name given to the Caucasus offensive.

<sup>37</sup> This passage, and the previous sentence, were originally slightly different. They are here printed as amended on the following day.

<sup>38</sup> On 31st July 1942 this cover-name was changed to 'Nordlicht (Northern Light)'.

<sup>39</sup> i.e. Heinrich Himmler.

<sup>40</sup> *Hohere SS- und Polizeiführer* were Himmler's deputies in occupied countries.

<sup>41</sup> i.e. German-occupied Poland.

<sup>42</sup> On 23rd June 1943 Hitler ordered that there be no further extension of such native units, and the words 'and extended' were struck out of this paragraph.

<sup>43</sup> German-controlled formations raised from Russian Turkestan and the Caucasus.

<sup>44</sup> On 1st June 1943, the result of the conversion of X Flying Corps to Air Force Command South, under the direct command of Commander-in-Chief Air Force, this whole paragraph (III. A.3) was changed and the air war in the whole eastern Mediterranean area was placed under the control of Commander-in-Chief Air Force (instead of under Commander-in-Chief South), cooperating with the Italian Supreme

Command.

<sup>45</sup> This appendix is not here printed. The Plenipotentiary for Greece, appointed on 28th April 1941, represented the political, economic, and cultural interests of Germany in Greece.

<sup>46</sup> This was a previous order concerning unified command in the Mediterranean.

<sup>47</sup> Such a report was presented on 18th November by the Commander-in-Chief Navy, Admiral Doenitz, who had replaced Admiral Raeder in this capacity on 30th January 1943.

<sup>48</sup> i.e. Lwow in Southern Poland.

<sup>49</sup> i.e. Brest-Litovsk in Eastern Poland.